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# PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

ILLUSTRATED,

IN

THIRTY SERMONS,

ON VARIOUS

DOCTRINES, ORDINANCES, AND DUTIES,

TAUGHT AND ENJOINED BY

Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

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BY WILLIAM JONES,

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AND AUTHOR OF THE

"HISTORY OF THE WALDENSES," "BIBLICAL CYCLOPEDIA,"

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"AND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with *excellency of Speech* or of *Wisdom*, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and HIM CRUCIFIED,"—1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

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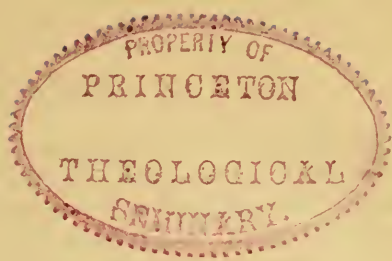
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## PREFACE.

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THE design of the present volume is to furnish some illustration of those Doctrines and Duties by which Christianity was characterized in the days of the Apostles, and the belief and practice of which are essential to a just exhibition of the Kingdom of Christ in this world. It is readily granted, that productions of a *professedly* similar tendency are sufficiently abundant in our day, when the press teems with volumes of Discourses, Sermons, Lectures, &c.; but as the Author has not been so fortunate as to meet with any one work which embodies the whole of his plan, and which he could therefore consider as superseding that, which he now presumes to offer for public acceptance, he trusts that candid readers will be content with this apology, for adding one volume more to the stock on hand.

Should, however, the plea now tendered, be considered inadmissible by any, he might possibly strengthen it by urging, that a long, and somewhat intimate, acquaintance, with the professing world, has led him to see, or at least to fancy, that, among the preachers of the present day, an omission or defect is observable, in regard to the subjects on which their Discourses are founded. To him they appear to be almost exclusively restricted to, what is called, *personal religion*, to the neglect of the laws, principles, injunctions, ordinances, and approved customs, of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The effects of this are manifold and glaring. Multitudes assume the Christian name, and would take it much amiss not to be regarded as the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, who still content themselves with calling Jesus, "Lord, Lord," while they "do not the things which he says." Such persons have no ear to give to "what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" they are mere *hearers* of the word, and *not doers* of it; whereas, if there be any truth in the Bible, all such religion is vain.

The attempt to detach the genuine profession of the religion of Christ from an unreserved obedience to the laws of his kingdom,—whatever self-denial and present suffering that obedience may occasion,—is utterly futile and self-deceptive, and will, eventually, be found a miserable delusion. Yet, in this delusion, how many, alas, are encouraged and supported by their religious guides: but the great Prophet of the church taught a different lesson. “Ye are my friends,” said the Saviour, in the days of his public ministry, “if ye do *whatsoever* I command you.” Hence it follows, that obedience to all things, whatsoever Christ has commanded, is the surest test of our discipleship.

But it is not only in the *subjects of discourse*, which occupy the pulpits and the press of the present day, that the Author finds a source of lamentation. He thinks that in what regards the *character of the professed preachers* of Christ's Gospel, there is a lamentable “falling away” from the primitive pattern, as well as from the Apostolic method of obtaining pastors. In primitive times, the Gospel was not,—as is now almost universally the case,—preached *for hire*; neither were the churches corrupted by *worldly fellowship*;—two manifest evils, which act upon and strengthen each other; to which a third may be added, that of confining the pastorate of a church to a *single person*.

It was one part of the system of Antichrist, to make the office of Overseer to a Christian church a regular means of subsistence, in the same way as the respective callings of a tent-maker, a fisherman, or a taxgatherer. This, like many other popish errors, which most protestants have too faithfully copied, is a perversion of the apostolic plan. Considering human depravity, and the great influence of the love of money, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit is very striking in requiring that Bishops, or Elders, should not be “greedy of filthy lucre.” For while the injunction implies, that they are entitled to an allowance, it clearly shews also, that it ought not to be the motive to their acceptance of the office, which, except in a very special case, it must be, if they had no other means of living. But there is a very wide difference between a man's getting his livelihood as a preacher, either by receiving an annual salary, or being paid so much for the sermon or the day, and merely accepting what his brethren may give him, as, in their judgment, the worth of his labour.

When, however, the office of President to a company of disciples is converted into a "profession," and young men are purposely educated for it, at Colleges and Academies, as for the Bar, or the practice of Medicine, one necessary result (to say nothing of many others) is,—that his education will be mainly conducted on the principle of learning how to give the most complete satisfaction to that audience before which his knowledge and eloquence are to be displayed. Now, it requires no great insight of human nature to see, that the wisest and most experienced man, and still more a very young one, must, under such circumstances, be surrounded by the strongest temptations to corrupt, or at least to mutilate, the word of God, whenever the perfection of its precepts shall clash with the imperfections of his hearers. For, if he faithfully persist in "declaring to them the *whole* counsel of God," he may expect that, at no very distant day, some "perverse disputers of corrupt minds" will charge him with unsoundness in the faith, and find means to "cast him out of the church," in order that a "minister" may be found of equal gifts, and a more accommodating conscience. Such a system, therefore, is sure to produce a very numerous class of "menpleasers," whose ministry will consist of "*ear-service*," instead of proceeding from "singleness of heart, as unto Christ;" and such, accordingly, in the present day, we find to be the case, to a lamentable extent.

The effect of such a state of things on hearers, is what might be expected. People in general, among whom may be many of the disciples of Christ, are in the habit of indulging themselves in those excited feelings produced by eloquent displays of evangelical truth, in which the Gospel, in a state of greater or less purity, is exhibited with that very "wisdom of words," which Paul studiously shunned, "lest," as he says, "the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Whereas, the pulpit orators of the present day, wiser by far, in their own conceit, than the inspired Apostle, however much their doctrine may *savour* of "Jesus Christ and him crucified," take especial care that their preaching shall not be deficient in "the enticing words of man's wisdom," which glitter in every sentence of the brilliant composition, and justly entitle it to be considered, as *inflated*, if not inspired.

Whether this course be pursued with the express design, that their hearers' "faith *should* stand in the wisdom of men, and *not*

in the power of God," and that,—to use a phrase of which some "ministers" are very fond,—they may "magnify their office," we will not undertake to say; but whatever the *design*, such is, undoubtedly, the *effect*. This is manifest from the almost popish veneration with which most "Reverend" gentlemen, of the sacred profession, are regarded, and the weight which their opinions always have, on theological points. Nor can we wonder at this, when we consider, that they have gained a smattering of Greek and Latin, and adopted a chaos of opinions, called Divinity, at a place termed a College, and have, perhaps, been since clad in a black gown, and dized with bands! From mortals so well qualified to enlighten others, who could withhold implicit credence; or doubt that they were successors of the Apostles, who certainly preceded them above eighteen hundred years?\*

Such absurdities would be ridiculous, if they were not pitiable; but when the prevalence of the Antichristian principle is daily found to blind believers to the plainest truths of Scripture, and to lead both them and unbelievers to "professional teachers," either for the knowledge of duty, or of the way of salvation,—as if the word of God were not of itself sufficient to teach both, or as if preachers had some peculiar faculty for understanding and explaining what is already conveyed in words "which the Holy Spirit teacheth," and which the Apostle distinctly represents, as better than

\* The author is well aware that any recommendation of a book, coming from so obscure an individual as himself, can obtain but little notice in this age of "great names," otherwise he should be tempted to bespeak the reader's attention to a little volume which has lately issued from the press, entitled, "LETTERS on the present state of the visible Church of Christ; addressed to John Angel James, minister of the Gospel in Birmingham, by R. M. BEVERLEY, sold by Dinnis, Paternoster Row. He is a total stranger to Mr. Beverley, whom he has never seen; but he has read his book with considerable satisfaction; and rejoices to think, he has so able an ally in pleading the much despised cause of Primitive Christianity. There are points, no doubt, on which their opinions differ; and one of these is the subject of Baptism. Mr. B. is evidently a stranger to the Baptismal controversy; he does not understand the main gist of the argument, or see its importance as regards the visible church; otherwise, he never would have *mis*-represented the principles of the Baptists as he has done.—Letter XVII. p. 129, 130.

Should this note, at any time, come under his observation, he is respectfully requested to look into a little tract, of which a third edition has just made its appearance, entitled, "Personal Religion Vindicated, in relation to Christian Baptism." BY ISAIAH BIRT. Sold by Wightman.—Price 1s.

“the words which man's wisdom teacheth;”—when we see an evil of such magnitude daily spreading itself and taking deeper root, both *in* the National Church, and *out* of it, every well instructed mind must bewail the fact, and wish to see the evil counteracted.

A further consequence of the foregoing evil, and which is also in part the effect of it, is, that the church and the world are mixed together, partly in church-fellowship, and partly through the custom of seat-letting. Both of these arise from the system of “hired preachers.” The salaries must be paid, and to accomplish that, the hearers must be sufficiently numerous. Hence a want of caution, perhaps even of care, in admitting members; hence, also, the necessity of letting the seats, and constituting a body, called the “congregation,” as distinguished from the “church,” though both words have the same meaning. But this is one way of cheating conscience; to admit a manifest unbeliever, or person of no religion, as a member, would be “too bad;” but as his money is very good, and would be very convenient, it is thought there can be no harm in letting him a seat, and thus giving him a pecuniary interest in the hired preacher, whose opinions he has therefore as much right to control, as the orthodox member has. Let the details of this matter, however, for the present, have the veil of secrecy; and the Lord grant that, ere long, the whole system may be consumed by “the Spirit of his mouth.” But as connected with the present subject, it must be manifest, that so long as people go to hear preachers, more with a view to amusement, or something like it, than the salvation of their souls, or their growth in grace, so long preachers will be found, who by the exhibition of intellectual power, and skill in language, will attract congregations sufficiently large to warrant them, upon the principles of Political Economy, to carry their talents to such a market, with full assurance of a profitable return.

Infinite was the Wisdom which declared, that “the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light.” Had this not been the case, the attempts which, for above a century past, have been made to restore Primitive Christianity, could hardly have been attended with so little comparative success, assisted as the labourers were in their work, by the directions of an infallible guide. But they, like Christians of other communions, have been too much like the disciples at Corinth,—“carnal,

and walking as men;" hence their strifes and divisions; hence their neglect of the apostle's injunction, that they should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" and hence the little fruit arising from their attempts to establish churches, similar to those "which in Judea were in Christ Jesus." These attempts, however, have by no means altogether failed. Many such churches have been formed in different parts of England, a still greater number in Scotland, and some in Ireland. There are also many in America, which *externally* bear a resemblance to those in Apostolic times; but how far, in *other* respects, may be doubted, for the reasons given in the Appendix.

The worship of such churches is conducted, not by persons educated for the purpose, but by members whom their brethren have chosen as possessing, in some reasonable degree, the qualifications specified by Paul, in writing to Timothy and Titus, without regard to what the trades may be, by which they "provide things honourable in the sight of all men." Such an individual, in the common discharge of his duty, has prepared the Discourses which form this volume; and as well from that consideration, as from the preceding remarks, it will readily be supposed, that he does not enter into competition with those Masters of Logic and Rhetoric, who adorn the pulpits of so many Churches and Chapels in this land of Sermons, where hours are spent in hearing voluminous comments, often darker than deep, on a plain and concise text, consisting of "a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Having long passed the age of three score years and ten, and feeling that his departure cannot be far distant, he leaves this Volume as a legacy to those believers, his connexion with whom has given it existence; with a fervent prayer to the God of all grace,—that it may still benefit them, when he is no more;—that it may furnish some assistance to those, who seek to preach Apostolical doctrines with primitive simplicity;—that it may tend to correct many prevalent errors in various sects;—and, above all, that, under the divine influence of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures it contains may be the means of making many a stout hearted and rebellious sinner, "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" to whom "be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."



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# SERMON I.

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## THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL AND METHOD OF PUBLISHING IT.

*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*

Acts xvii. 1—4.

WHEN the apostles, and their associates in the work of the ministry, first went abroad throughout the nations, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, they were careful to apprise their hearers, that they brought with them no new doctrine: they said “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: namely, that Christ,” the promised seed, the expected Messiah, “should suffer, and that he should be the first to rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, (of Israel,) and to the Gentiles.” —Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

The Lord Jesus himself, before his ascension into heaven, had instructed his ambassadors how he would have them to conduct themselves in one important particular. They were to “tarry at Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high;” and in that city, where the Prince of Life was crucified, the glad tidings of pardon and reconciliation were

to be *first* proclaimed.\* Accordingly, we find, that, on the day of Pentecost, the promise of the Father was fulfilled—the Holy Spirit descended upon them in all his enlightening, quickening, and life-giving influences—and they preached the Gospel with wonderful success. Three thousand gladly received the word of salvation as preached by the apostle Peter; and, on the same day, they were baptized and added to the church.—Acts ii. 41.

An attentive reader of the Acts of the Apostles will perceive the same regard to order, priority, or preference, as respects the publication of the Gospel, marking the conduct of the first ministers of the word. Thus, we find the apostle Peter,† on a subsequent occasion, impressing upon the minds of his Jewish brethren a consideration of this interesting fact: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, ‘And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.’ *Unto you first*, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

We find the same order observed by the apostle Paul and his companions, when executing the commission which they had received, to make the gospel known among the Gentiles. Into whatsoever city the providence of God directed their steps, their first enquiry seems to have been, whether there was a synagogue of Jews in it; in which case, they attended its worship on the Sabbath-day, and testified among them, that the Messiah had appeared, and that Jesus of Nazareth was HE; (see Acts xiii. 14—26; ch. xiv. 1; ch. xvi. 13;—) pointing them to the writings of their own prophets for the evidence of the truth of what they said, and showing the accomplishment of their predictions in his sufferings, death, resurrection, and subsequent glory. The sacred historian, in the words of our text, in narrating the proceedings of Paul and Silas on their arrival at Thessalonica, is careful to show us, that they in no respect deviated

\* Luke xxiv. 47—49.

† Acts iii. 25, 26.



from their ordinary course of proceeding: for, "Paul, *as his manner was*, went into the synagoge of the Jews, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom he preached unto them, was the Christ, or Messiah."

The verses first read, present us with a most interesting view of the subject-matter, and also of the manner, or apostolic method, of preaching the Gospel. A consideration of the words will lead us to attend to each of these particulars, and suggest various things which, under the blessing of God, may be profitable to us for instruction. We are here taught, that the Messiah *must, of necessity, be a suffering person*—that he must die and rise again. This will lead to an important enquiry—*what rendered his sufferings necessary?* Having considered this point, we shall attend to the apostle's method of proving, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached, was the promised seed—the Christ or Messiah.—We shall then notice the effects produced, by the apostle's preaching, among the people of Thessalonica;—and conclude by shewing the use we should make of the subject.

I. We are plainly taught, in the words of the text, that the Messiah, whoever he were, must, of necessity, be a suffering person.

This was a very unpalatable doctrine, at all times, to Jewish ears, though plainly taught in their own Scriptures. Accustomed to associate in their minds, the Messiah's advent with ideas of magnificence and glory, the carnality of their hearts led them to secularize all the grand things that the prophets had written on this most interesting subject; so that, instead of looking for the "man of sorrows, and one whose companion was grief," the whole nation, at the time of Christ's appearing, were fondly dreaming of a temporal kingdom for the Messiah; and not finding any thing in the character of Jesus, at all answerable to this master prejudice, they rejected all his claims to the Messiahship, and put him to death as an impostor. Nor were his immediate

apostles, at the time of his death, altogether exempt from the influence of this leaven; the veil was still, in some degree, upon their hearts, and they were, in a great measure, blind to the true meaning of the writings of their own prophets. Hence our Lord's cutting reproof to two of them, who were stumbled at the circumstances of his crucifixion. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." And he further added, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me"—"Thus it is written, and thus *it behoved* Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."—Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—47.

Here we see our Lord classes the prophetic writings under three divisions—the Law of Moses—the Prophets—and the Psalms: and he teaches us, that, in each of them, the Messiah was held forth as a suffering person—one whose sufferings were to issue in his death—and his death to be followed by his resurrection on the third day. Let us now briefly examine each of them, in the order here laid down.

1. With regard to *the law of Moses*;—we are here taught, that not only did Moses write of Christ, but also that his writings exhibit him as a suffering person. It may, however, be interrogated—in what chapter or verse does the Jewish lawgiver speak of the Messiah under this character? It is granted that he foretells him as "a *Prophet*, whom the Lord would raise up unto the children of Israel, like unto himself, and whom they should hear in all things"\*—but where is he described as a *Priest*? Perhaps no where, in so many words; and yet intimations of his priestly character

\* Deut. xviii. 18.

and office, of his sufferings and death—of the shedding of his blood, and the laying down of his life—prophetical or typical allusions to these are found, more or less, in almost every page of the law of Moses. What, in fact, was the whole of the legal dispensation, but “a shadow of good things to come,” the body or substance of which is found only in Christ? Consider, for a moment, what the apostle Paul teaches the Hebrews, concerning those typical institutions which are classed under the general designation of the law of Moses, namely, the temple, the altar, the priests—the various sacrifices and oblations that were continually offered, day by day, and year by year, and say, what was the import of all? The whole was designed by infinite wisdom to adumbrate the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow; and, divested of their typical relation to Him, the whole texture and frame-work of the Levitical Economy dwindles into insignificance. Unless we admit the apostolic interpretation of this matter, as given us in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are involved in perplexity the moment we open the ritual of Moses: we see no end to be answered by its innumerable requirements; they seem as useless as they were numerous, and as oppressive as they were useless; and we feel ourselves harassed by the suggestion, that such an establishment was derogatory to the honour of God. But admit the alleged correspondence, and they are justified by the importance of their design; they instruct and delight us by the harmony of their combination with other things, and they throw a grandeur around the economy of grace, which confirms our faith in the Gospel, and elevates our hopes of the eternal inheritance.

2. From the law of Moses, that system of types and shadows, and ritual observances, let us now direct our attention to the writings of *the prophets*, which are also said to exhibit the Messiah as a suffering person; and, on this head, two or three selections may suffice. To begin with Isaiah—thus he wrote of Him: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did

esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed—He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter—He was cut off out of the land of the living—He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.”\* Hear again the prophet Daniel on the subject: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, (or restrain the offering of sacrifices for sin) and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness—and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”† We may hear the prophet Zechariah also, on this subject: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”‡ But enough, as respects the testimony of the prophets to the character of the Messiah as a suffering person. Let us now glance at,

3. The Book of Psalms: and if you turn to the twenty-second psalm, you find it comprises one clear and entire prophecy of the sufferings of Christ. The manner and circumstances of his death, the insults and mockery of his enemies, and the very words which he uttered upon the cross, are here particularly foretold. This psalm exhibits him as “offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death.” “I am poured out like water,” says the Holy Sufferer, “and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”—ver. 14, 15. Much to the same effect is the sixty-ninth psalm, which we know is also a prophecy of the Messiah. “Save

\* Isa. liii. 3—9.

† Dan. ix. 24—26.

‡ Zech. xiii. 7.

me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me: I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.”—“Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”—Psalm xxii. *passim*, and lxix. 1—3; 13—21, &c.

Such are the deeply affecting strains in which the prophetic pen had portrayed Messiah’s suffering state; and we have only to turn our attention to the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, to find the whole realized.

But the prophets not only foretold his humiliation, as issuing in his death: they also predicted his rising again, and entering into his glory. Hence, in the sixteenth Psalm, we find the Messiah, in prophecy, thus addressing his heavenly Father, in the immediate prospect of his death.—“My flesh shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—ver. 9—11. His royal installation, when, by the the right hand of God, he was not only raised from the dead, but advanced to his throne in the heavens, is thus beautifully and eloquently described:—“The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.”\* His triumphal entry into the highest heavens is also thus described:—“Lift up your

\* Psalm xxi.

heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.\* Again, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom; thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."† So also the prophet Isaiah not only predicts the sufferings of the Messiah, but also his resurrection from the dead, and the glory and honour which awaited him, as the reward of his obedience: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."—"I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death."—Isaiah liii. 10—12. See also Psalm cx.

From what hath been said on this first head of discourse, we may surely infer the truth of the apostle's proposition, that the Messiah must, of necessity, be a suffering person, or, in other words, none but a suffering person could be the Messiah—that he must die, and rise again, and enter into his glory: which brings us to the second enquiry, viz.‡

II. Wherein consisted *the necessity* of the Messiah's sufferings? And here several things offer themselves for consideration.

1. It is manifest, that his sufferings were unavoidable, if the Scriptures were to be fulfilled; for the Scriptures cannot be broken. The Lord Jesus himself reasoned with his apostles upon this principle: "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." And having

\* Psalm xxiv. 7—9.

† Psalm xlv. 6, 7, 17; Heb. i. 8, 9.

opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, he said unto them, “*Thus it is written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day.”\* We know that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God; they are *his* word, which cannot possibly fail of its accomplishment; for sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than one iota of what he hath spoken,—either in the way of testimony, promise, prediction, or threatening, not come to pass. In foretelling the sufferings of Christ, “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” But then another enquiry naturally arises upon this,—

2. *Why* were these things predicted or *foretold* concerning the Messiah? The answer to this is—because God had fore-ordained or pre-determined, that these things should take place. We must not imagine, that any of the events that happened to the Lord Jesus Christ, occurred by chance, as it is termed; such a thought would be highly blasphemous. The whole train of events, even to the minutest circumstance, was arranged in the divine mind from eternity; and, consequently, “when the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his anointed,” they only did “whatsoever God’s hand and counsel *determined before to be done*.”† All came to pass according to an eternal purpose, which Jehovah purposed in himself from everlasting. Still, the question recurs—*Why* did the blessed God, of his own self-moved good pleasure, determine to subject the Son of his love to such a state of unparalleled suffering as that which the prophets foretold, and which the evangelists and apostles have recorded, in their respective writings? We answer,

3. Because the whole was necessary to the salvation of guilty rebels. Here our enquiries must rest; for it is utterly in vain to seek for any reason independent of this. Jehovah determined, from eternity, to glorify his perfections in the salvation of myriads of the human race; and this

\* Luke xxiv. 44—46.

† Acts iv. 24—28.

is the plan or method which infinite wisdom devised, for accomplishing this gracious design. And it is a scheme of salvation every way worthy of himself, as the apostle tells the Hebrews:—"It *became* HIM, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.\*" These "many sons" are termed the heirs of salvation—they were chosen in Christ before the world began—they were predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will;† they were given to Christ, to be redeemed by his blood—they are the sheep for whom he laid down his life, and on whom he will bestow eternal life.‡ To procure their salvation, it was necessary that he should become their substitute, having *their* sins so charged to *his* account, as that the punishment, due to them, was exacted of him, and he was made answerable. He bare their sins in his own body on the tree; and, by dying in their stead, the just for the unjust, he rendered full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, and procured their pardon and acceptance. In no other possible way could mercy be extended to the guilty, consistently with the claims of justice—the holiness and purity of the divine nature—the honour of the divine government—and the harmony of the divine perfections. And this explains to us the necessity there was for the sufferings of the Messiah.

III. We now proceed to consider the apostle's *method* of proving, that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached unto them, was THE CHRIST, or true Messiah. It is said, "He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures"—namely, of the Old Testament, which was all that was then committed to writing—"opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ," or the Messiah.

The evidence for the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth,

\* Heb. ii. 10.

† Eph. i. 4, 5.

‡ John x. 28; ch. xvii. 6.



which arises from a careful comparison of the predictions of the prophets, with the facts recorded concerning him by the evangelists and apostles, is abundantly sufficient to justify all his claims, and prove him to be the promised seed—the Saviour of the world. Of this mode of proof, the apostles appear to have always availed themselves, when arguing with the unbelieving Jews, in the most unqualified manner. These predictions are very numerous, pervading, as we have already seen, a great part of the Old Testament—the particulars foretold are so many and extraordinary—so minute and circumstantial—and, though delivered by a succession of prophets, they are all so perfectly harmonious and consistent with each other—and all so exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and in him alone, to whom they are constantly applied throughout the New Testament,—that the evidence, arising from this source, has all the force of a miracle. We can only take a rapid glance of it in this place.

For instance—It is plainly taught in the Old Testament, that the Messiah should come of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and of the family of David.\* And this was precisely the case with Jesus of Nazareth, as the whole New Testament bears witness. The word that was in the beginning with God, and was God, “took on him (he took hold of) the seed of Abraham,” as Paul tells the Hebrews. And, again, “it is evident our Lord sprang out of Judah:” and, with regard to the particular family from which he descended, we read, that “God hath raised up an horn of salvation *in the house of his servant David*”—“Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”† The place of his birth was pointed out by the prophet Micah—viz., Bethlehem Ephratah; and the evangelist Matthew informs us, that “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of King Herod.”‡ Isaiah had predicted, that “a virgin should conceive, and bear a son, whose name should be called Immanuel.”|| And the evangelists show, the

\* Gen. xxii. 18; ch. xlix. 10. 2 Sam. vii. 12, 16. Isa. xi. 1.

† Heb. ii. 16; ch. vii. 14. Luke i. 69. Rom. i. 3.

‡ Micah v. 2; with Mat. ii. 1–8. || Isa. vii. 14.

accomplishment of this, in the birth of Jesus Christ.\* The prophets had foretold, that their Messiah's public advent should be preceded by a forerunner, in the spirit and power of Elijah, preparing his way; and we see the fulfilment of this, in the mission and ministry of John the Baptist.† The Messiah was to confirm his mission and doctrine by miracles, according to Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6; and, to this source of evidence, we find the Lord Jesus constantly referring men, in justification of his claims,‡—a source of evidence, which his enemies were compelled, at times, to allow. The Messiah was to be rejected of his countrymen the Jews, according to many prophetic intimations,||—and we find the writers of the New Testament adducing these predictions, and showing their exact accomplishment, in the history of Jesus of Nazareth.§ He was to be treacherously betrayed by one of his disciples, and even the sum, which the traitor should receive, is specified; and, in the conduct of Judas Iscariot, we have the circumstantial fulfilment of all this.—Psalm xli. 9. Zech. xi. 12; with John xiii. 18. Matthew xxvi. 14, 15; xxvii. 3, 10. A great variety of particulars are mentioned in ancient prophecy concerning the treatment Messiah should receive from his enemies:—such as, that, “He should be numbered with transgressors”—that he should be mocked and reviled amidst his bitterest sufferings—that they should give him gall and vinegar to drink—that they should part his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture—that he should be cut off from the land of the living by a violent death, yet that not a bone of him should be broken. He was to make his grave with the rich, but his flesh was not to see corruption; for he was to rise again from the dead, and ascend into the highest heavens, from whence he would distribute blessings, in rich abundance, upon the children of men. These are only a few of the many particulars, foretold by the holy

\* Mat. i. 20—24. Luke i. 35.

† Isa. xl. 3, 4. Mal. iii. 1; and iv. 5; with Mat. iii. 1—4; ch. xvii. 10—14; Luke i. 17.

‡ Mat. xi. 3—7; John v. 36. || Isa. viii. 14, 15; ch. liii. 3; Psalm cxviii. 22.

§ Mat. xii. 42—45. John i. 10, 11.

prophets, concerning the Messiah; and the evangelists and apostles direct us to their accomplishment, in the things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth. In Him, they were circumstantially fulfilled, but in no other individual; and hence the certainty of the conclusion, which the apostle enforced upon the Thessalonians,—“this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is THE CHRIST;”—which brings us to notice,—

IV. The *effects* which were produced by the preaching of the apostle among the Thessalonians. We are told that “some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” They received the apostle’s testimony as true; were fully persuaded that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and slain, was no other than the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, the *anointed* Prophet, Priest, and King of his church—and *believing* these things, let us see what line of conduct it led them to pursue.

1. *They consorted with Paul and Silas.* They separated themselves from all religious intercourse with their unbelieving neighbours and former associates, and became companions with the apostles in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. On this part of our subject, we shall find much light thrown by means of the epistles which Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians. Adverting to the success of his ministry among them, he says, “our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance;—and ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”\* Now they began to experience the world’s hatred towards Christ and his cause, and to see something of the enmity, which has existed from the beginning, between the two seeds. No sooner had they “put on Christ,” arranged themselves under the banner of the cross, and owned alle-

\* 1 Thess. i. 5–7.

giance to “the Captain of Salvation,” than “the Jews which believed not, *moved with envy*, gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar.”—Acts xvii. 5. This brought their faith and confidence to the test; but the apostle “thanked God without ceasing, because, when they received his doctrine, they received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God,” and so it wrought effectually in those that believed it; for they became followers of the churches of God, which in Judæa were in Christ Jesus, suffering like things of their own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews.\*

2. Another effect produced by their reception of the apostle’s testimony, or, in other words, believing Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah, was this—“it turned them to God from idols, to serve the living and the true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”†

This effect must appear very strange, perhaps unaccountable, to many professed Christians in our day, who are taught to think, that men may understand and believe this scripture proposition, namely, that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” without deriving the least saving benefit therefrom!—a pretty clear proof, how much the current theology of the present day needs to be rectified by the scripture standard. We hear the inspired writers declaring, that “the things concerning Jesus were written, that we might believe him to be *the Christ*, the Son of God; and that, believing, we might have life through his name.”‡ *They* declare, that “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is *born of God*”—and that the faith, or belief, “that Jesus is the Son of God, *overcomes the world*.”|| The apostle Paul was sent among the Gentiles, “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified;”§ but he made known among them nothing else than Jesus Christ and

\* 1 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

† 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.

‡ John xx. 31.

|| 1 John v. 1—5.

§ Acts xxvi. 18.

him crucified. This was the sum and substance of all his preaching; and he needed nothing more, for this doctrine was the wisdom and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believed it. At the time the apostle first brought this doctrine among the Thessalonians, he found them, as he found the Athenians, carried away to the worship of dumb idols, "imagining that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device, Acts xvii. 29; but the reception of the simple truth into the mind, revolutionized all their sentiments—it turned them from "the worship of dumb idols, to serve the living and the true God." And it was well calculated to produce such a change in them: for, in this doctrine, they learnt the true character of the living God, as the just God, and yet the Saviour: as so loving a guilty world, as to send his only begotten Son into it, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is in giving his Son to die for the ungodly—for sinners—for his enemies—for such as are without strength to deliver themselves—that the love of the Father comes commended towards us—it shines with peculiar lustre; and the belief of this doctrine *works by love* to the divine character—to the Saviour—to the doctrine of the cross, in which the believer finds all his salvation and all his desire. It attaches him to the service of the living and the true God, and promotes obedience to every part of his revealed will. "We love him, because he first loved us; and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." It was so with the Thessalonians. The doctrine which they believed, led them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and even to glory in tribulations also, for these wrought patience, while patience wrought experience, and experience, hope. Thus they were led to wait for the second coming of Christ from heaven, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."\*

\* Titus ii. 13, 14.

3. Once more.—The powerful effect of the belief of this doctrine, however much it may be slighted and set at nought by many in our day, appears in this, that it led the Thessalonians to abound “in the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”\*

Having, through grace, believed the testimony which God had given of his Son, their faith was not a dormant, inactive, inoperative principle; it *wrought effectually*, and produced the labour of love, and the patience of hope; and so conspicuous were these fruits of the Gospel in them, that the apostle confidently inferred from them “their election of God,”—1 Thess. i. 4. In particular, it led them to abound in love one toward another, and even toward all men. The apostles make great account of *this* fruit of the Spirit in all their writings. Nor can we wonder at it; for it is the Saviour’s new command, delivered just before he suffered, and enforced upon his disciples by the all-powerful motive of his own love in dying for them.† It is that by which he would have them distinguished from the world around them; and obedience to it is made essential to the Christian character. In vain do we profess to love God, if we are destitute of love to the brethren; for “every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?”‡ Such is the doctrine of the apostles on this subject; and it appeared conspicuously among the brethren at Thessalonica; for it is a remarkable commendation, which the apostle Paul bears to them, when he says: “But, as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And, indeed, ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.”||

\* 1 Thess. i. 3.

‡ 1 John v. 1; ch. iv. 20.

† John xiii. 34.

|| 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10.

The highest advances which the disciples of Christ can make in this duty, will always leave them at an immense distance from the perfect pattern, which they are called to imitate, namely, the love of the Saviour, in laying down his life for them: this is a love that passeth knowledge; it is, nevertheless, their duty to aim at it, and to be satisfied with nothing less than a perfect conformity to it.

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We learn from this subject, in what consisted the primitive apostolic gospel, and how the Lord's ambassadors held it forth in their preaching. Their leading object was, to make known the divine faithfulness and truth, in the accomplishment of the promises which God made unto the fathers, by the prophets: that he had now "visited and redeemed his people, and raised up a horn of salvation for them, in the house of his servant David." In this way, they testified the gospel of the grace of God; calling the attention of their hearers to the person, character, and work of the Lord Jesus; his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, in which were fulfilled all that the prophets had spoken: and they proclaimed the promise of salvation to all, who received their testimony concerning "Him, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." In doing this, they made no account of the different shades of character, which may be found among apostate beings, all of whom have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. They exhibited JESUS, in all the glory of his character, as the image of the invisible God—an eternally divine person, God manifest in the flesh, the Son of the Highest coming into this world to do his Father's will, and for that purpose becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and, by this act of obedience, working out the justifying righteousness, in which all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and make their boast. They declared that, in this righteousness, God is *well pleased*; and that, as a demonstration thereof, he raised his Son from the dead, and rewarded him with the highest honours at his own right hand in the heavens, where all power and authority are committed into his

hands,—angels, principalities, and powers being made subject unto him. And, to this doctrine, God bore witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. The hand and power of the Lord everywhere accompanied the word spoken, so that many believed, and turned unto the Lord. Thus they made disciples, whom they afterwards taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. Let the preachers of the present day take a lesson from this primitive model, saying, with the great apostle of the Gentiles, “I am determined to make known among you, nothing else than Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” and leave it to God to make converts. They will thus deliver their own souls, and be a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish!

And let all, who either hear or read of these things, put the interesting question to their own souls, “Dost *thou* believe on the Son of God?” What influence has the belief of this truth had upon thy heart and life? Has it communicated peace to thy guilty conscience—inspired thee with hope of the glory of God—and led thee to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord? There cannot be a more fatal delusion than to suppose, that the truth concerning Jesus can be understood and believed, without the subject of it deriving from it any saving benefit, or while remaining in a state of alienation of heart from God and his ways. It is faith in this grand truth, that justifies the sinner—that reconciles his heart to God—that works by love, and influences to all holy obedience—that sanctifies the soul—and gives the victory over the world. Let all who hear these things, beware of contenting themselves with orthodox notions, instead of true faith—let them endeavour to realize the importance of this doctrine; and remember, that “it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”



## SERMON II.

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### THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.*

1 Cor. xv. 1—3.

THE state of the church at Corinth, at the time the apostle wrote this epistle to them, furnishes an affecting instance of the proneness there is, even in real Christians, to swerve from their first principles, and to corrupt the best institutions.

Paul had himself preached the Gospel in that renowned city, in all its genuine simplicity, and had gathered a numerous church, as we are informed by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, in ch. xviii. On his first arrival there, he met with Aquila and Priscilla, who had lately come from Italy, two converts from Judaism to the Christian faith; and attaching himself to them, they resorted in company to the Jewish synagogue every Sabbath, where the apostle reasoned with his unbelieving hearers, and “persuaded the Jews and the Greeks—testifying that Jesus of Nazareth, was the Christ, the true Messiah.” Though many opposed his doctrine, and blasphemed, yet some received the apostle’s testimony, among whom was “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, who believed on the Lord, with all his house:” “and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized.”— Acts xviii. 8.

Here commenced the Christian church at Corinth—a church which was inferior to none in those days, in respect of the number and the variety of its gifts, of which they appear to have become proud and vain, but greatly inferior to most other churches in the grand essential of Christianity, namely, CHARITY. Their teachers multiplied in abundance, and, in point of eloquence, they far outstript Paul, who had only one plain subject to dwell upon—“Jesus Christ and him crucified,”—and as to “his speech and his preaching, these were not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” But this the apostle did *purposely*, “that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

At the time of writing this epistle, through the influence of corrupt teachers, and the natural depravity of their own hearts, some very pernicious errors in doctrine were current among them; such as a denial of the resurrection of the body at the last day: and the church had also fallen into such unbecoming practices, in conducting their public worship, especially in their manner of commemorating the Lord’s death, that the apostle found it necessary to recal their attention to *first principles*—to the truth he had formerly preached, which they had professed to believe, and with which their eternal salvation was connected.

In several of the preceding chapters, the apostle had been correcting the things that were amiss among them, particularly their abuse of the Lord’s supper—ch. xi. 17—29;—the exercise of their spiritual gifts—ch. xii. and xiv.—in the midst of which, he introduces an episode in praise of Charity, or Love, ch. xiii; and in the chapter from which the words of the text are taken, he proceeds to refute their notion regarding the resurrection of the dead, the subject of which occupies the whole chapter. To lay a proper foundation for this, he begins with recalling to their recollection, what that Gospel was, which he, at first, preached unto them, which they had received, and wherein they stood; by which also they were saved, if they kept it in memory, and so were not moved away from the hope of the gospel. My design, in the

present discourse, is to attempt an illustration of one leading and essential branch of the gospel, namely, *the death of Christ*, and in doing so, we shall—Consider Christ's death as *a fact*;—then enquire, a little more particularly, into *the nature and properties* of that fact;—next, examine what the Scriptures teach us, respecting *the end or design* of that stupendous event;—and, lastly, apply the subject.

I. The death of Christ is one of the most important facts comprised in the gospel testimony; insomuch, that the gospel is denominated preaching, Christ crucified. Thus the apostle tells these same Corinthians: “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified.”\* And, again, he terms it, the “preaching of the cross.”† It was the subject of prophecy under the Old Testament, as is manifest from various parts of the prophetic writings; particularly the twenty-second Psalm, which is almost wholly taken up with a description of Messiah's sufferings, by means of which, he was to be brought unto the dust of death.‡ Thus, also the prophets Isaiah and Daniel testified beforehand of his sufferings and death. The former says: “He was *wounded* for our transgressions, and *bruised* for our iniquities—he was *oppressed* and *afflicted*—brought as a lamb to the slaughter, taken off by an oppressive judgment—cut off from the land of the living—for the transgression of my people was he *smitten* to death—that his grave was appointed with the wicked||.” And the latter prophet tells us, that “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.§ The Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, called the attention of his apostles to these prophecies concerning himself, and upbraided them with slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had written concerning him. “Ought not Christ,” said he, “to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”¶ Thus it was, that the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testified beforehand of his sufferings,\*\* and so his death was

\* 1 Cor. i. 22.

† ver. 18.

‡ Psalm xxii. 15, &c.

|| Isa. liii. 6—9. *Lowth's translation.*

§ Dan. ix. 26.

¶ Luke xxiv. 26.

\*\* 1 Pet. i. 11.

*according to the Scripture*, as is here affirmed. Every circumstance regarding it was minutely foretold; consequently, he in whom these predicted circumstances were accomplished, must be the true Messiah.

Now, it is an incontestable fact, that, Jesus Christ was crucified at Jerusalem, in the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judæa. This fact is acknowledged both by friends and foes—by Christians and Infidels: by the former, as the ground of their hope and rejoicing; by the latter, as the reason or matter of their reproach and contempt. When the Jews were charged with his death, they never denied the fact; but, on the contrary, considered it as an act of justice, which had fully determined the controversy in their favour. Indeed, they took all possible care to make his death certain; for though they were not permitted to break a bone of him, as they did to the two thieves, yet they pierced his side with a spear, from whence issued blood and water,\* which shows, that, not only the pericardium, which encloses the heart and contains water, was pierced, but also the heart itself, and its vessels, from whence the blood (which is the life) takes its spring and is propelled through the whole body: and this, although he had been alive till then, would have caused instant death. Their pains, however, were unnecessary, and might have been spared, for he was already dead. Nevertheless, the circumstance evinced the reality of his death, and “he that saw it bare record, that we might believe.”† The death of Jesus, therefore, is a well attested fact, admitted both by friends and foes; and as the circumstances attending it agree most exactly with what had been foretold, the inference seems just, that Jesus must be the promised Messiah. We now proceed—

II. To enquire, a little more particularly, into *the nature and properties of his death*. And, here, several things present themselves as deserving of our consideration.

1. It was a *shameful and ignominious* death. Crucifixion was, at that time, throughout the Roman empire, far more

\* John xix. 34.

† ver. 35.

disgraceful than any kind of death, known among us, is at this day. No citizen of Rome, however atrocious his guilt, or however mean his station in life, though the humblest mechanic, or the poorest peasant, could be subjected to it. If a man were not a slave, as well as a criminal, it was not in the power of any magistrate so far to dishonour him, as to consign him to so ignominious a punishment. Yet this was the kind of death to which the Lord of life and glory submitted; and, hence, we may see the force of the apostle's words when, pointing to the death of Christ, he says, "he endured the cross, *despising the shame*."—Hebrews xii. 2.

2. The death of Christ was a most *painful* death. The person sentenced to crucifixion was first scourged with cords; after which, he must bear his cross to the place of execution. There, his clothes being stripped off, his body was stretched upon the timber—his hands nailed to the cross-beam—and his feet to the lower part. The cross was then raised, and fixed in the ground; nails were driven through the most sensible parts of the body; and thus sustaining its own weight, the pain was rendered exquisite beyond expression; yet it was sometimes two or three days before the criminal expired. All this, however, was trifling, in comparison of what Jesus endured, in his soul, in the garden of Gethsemane, ere there was any visible hand upon him, when he prayed, that the cup might pass from him: and afterwards, on the cross when he cried, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" How shall we account for this, when many of his followers have faced death with the most undaunted resolution? But further:

3. Crucifixion was an *accursed* death. The law of Moses pronounces the man accursed that hangeth on a tree!\* and Christ, in his sufferings, bore this curse: for so runs the apostle's declaration to the Galatians—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."† So that, though he was 'perfectly innocent, "holy,

\* Deut. xxi. 22 23.

† Gal. iii. 13.

harmless, and undefiled by sin, yet his death was the curse and punishment due to sin. Moreover,

4. It was a *voluntary* death,—an act of obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. So we hear him telling the Jews: “No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself.”\* “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; then said I, Lo, I come: I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart.”† But,

5. It was a *vicarious*, or *substitutional*, death; in which point of view, it is uniformly held forth in the prophetic and other writings: “Messiah shall be cut off, but *not for himself*.”‡ “He suffered, the just for the unjust.”§ “For the iniquities of God’s people was he stricken,”§ which agrees with the account that he gives of his own death, when he says: “I lay down my life for the sheep.”¶—“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.” So, in the New Testament, we are told, that he “died for us,”—“died for our sins,” which is the express language of our text. To which I add,

6. That it was an *active* death, or, to speak more properly, the death of Christ was not purely passive suffering, but an expression of obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, who sanctified, or set him apart in his eternal counsels; in due time, sent him into the world, and gave him a commandment to lay down his life for the sheep. Now, to illustrate this position, let it be observed, that

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his death, acted as a priest, *offering up himself* unto God, a victim to appease divine justice. Observe how express the language of Scripture is on this point. The apostle declares: “He offered up himself”—“Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, *offered himself* without spot unto God.”\*\* “This man, after he had offered *one sacrifice* for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of

\* John x. 18.

† Psalm xl. 6—8

‡ Dan. ix. 26.

§ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

§ Isa. liii. 5.

¶ John x. 15.

\*\* Heb. vii. 17; ch. ix. 14.

God;" and this one sacrifice is explained to be "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ," once, in place of all the sacrifices that were offered under the law. And hence we may see, that though "he was taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain;" though the Jews and Romans were his murderers, yet they did not herein act as priests or sacrificers, for "he *gave himself* for us, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour;" and in all this he was *actively obedient*, even unto death.

Further, it ought to be carefully remarked on this subject, that it is the laying down of his life, which, by way of eminence, is called his *obedience*, in scripture style, as will appear by consulting the various places where that expression is used. It was by the things which he suffered that he learned obedience, though he were a Son.\*—"It was unto death that he became obedient, having taken upon him the form of a servant."† The will of God which he came to *do*, and by which his people are sanctified, was the offering up of his body once.‡ This is that obedience by which they are made righteous, or justified, and which is contrasted with the disobedience of Adam whereby we are made sinners, and so exposed to condemnation; and it is expressed by the apostle when treating on the subject, by his *dying* for the ungodly—dying for us—reconciling us to God *by his death*—making *atonement*, and so forth. Now all these are only different forms or modes of speech denoting one and the same thing, namely, the ONE RIGHTEOUSNESS, opposed to the *one offence*||. This was the great *commandment* he received of the Father, and for his obedience unto which the Father loved him—and most highly rewarded him.§ It was in *giving up the ghost* that he finished the work which the Father gave him to do.¶ It was for this cause he came into the world, even to minister, and *give his life* a ransom for many. He took part in flesh and blood that, *through death*, he might destroy him that had the power of death,\*\* and then,

\* Heb. v. 6—8.

† Phil. ii. 7, 8.

‡ Heb. x. 9, 10.

|| Rom. v. 6, 8, 10, 11, 18, 19.

§ John x. 17, 18. Phil. ii. 9.

¶ John xix. 30.

\*\* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

being made perfect *through sufferings*, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.\* The divine law requires perfect love to God and our neighbour; and in this one act of obedience, Jesus exercised both, to the highest possible perfection, and thus the law was perfectly fulfilled, yea, it was magnified and made honourable by the surety's obedience.

It is not intended, however, by what has now been said, to exclude the holy obedience of the Saviour's life, which partly consisted in acts of divine power confirming his mission—partly in acts of piety towards God, and mercy and goodness towards men—and all from the purest principles. These were absolutely necessary; but the Scripture directs us to look upon the holiness of his heart and life in a light subservient to that act of obedience which he finished on the cross; and as fitting and qualifying him to be a proper high priest—an acceptable sacrifice—a lamb without spot or blemish.† All the holiness of heart and life, all the dignity and worth of that divine person, was, as it were, centered and offered up to God in that one act of obedience—the laying down of his precious life as the ransom price of our redemption. And hence, I add,

7. That it was a *meritorious* death. It was fully adequate to all the demands of the law and justice of God—to every claim upon the sinner in the way of *satisfaction* for sin, or as the ground of *acceptance* with God. It was a sacrifice of infinite value—well pleasing to God—and in which he rests for ever satisfied, and demands no more offering for sin—“for by this one offering up of himself, Christ hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified” It is upon the ground of this infinitely perfect sacrifice, that the Lord hath promised to remember the sins and iniquities of his people no more—and where remission of those is, there is no more offering for sin.‡ This obedience of the divine substitute was worthy of the highest reward, both to himself and his people. Accordingly he was most highly exalted on

\* Heb. ii. 10; ch. v. 8, 9. † Heb. vii. 26; ch. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19. ‡ Heb. x. 14—18.



account of it, and rewarded according to his righteousness; and of that reward his people are made partakers.\* I proceed,

III. To examine what the Scriptures teach us respecting the *end and design* of the death of Christ. And on this point they are abundantly explicit. To instance in a few particulars.

1. We are expressly taught, that the design of Christ, in laying down his life for the guilty, was to make *satisfaction* to God, the moral governor of the universe, and *atone* for the sins of man:—"Now, once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself—he was once offered to bear the sins of many." "Christ our passover was sacrificed for us." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by his becoming a sin-offering, hath condemned sin in the flesh;" for "Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."† So also in the words of our text, Christ is said to have died *for our sins*, that is, as an atoning sacrifice, to expiate them; which agrees with the Saviour's own account of the matter, when he says, that the shedding of his blood was for the remission of sins.‡

Considering his death in this specific view, we see that he was the truth of all the sacrifices that were offered under the law, and that he came to consummate them: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" he taketh away the legal sacrifices, that he may establish his own. Of these sacrifices it is declared, that they could never take away sins; but upon the offering of *this* sacrifice, God declares that he will remember the sins and iniquities of his people no more.

Some of the sacrifices under the law were eucharistical, and are called peace-offerings; others expiatory, and are

\* Phil. ii. 9. † Heb. ix. 26; 1 Cor. v. 7; Rom. viii. 3; Eph. v. 2.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 28.

termed sin-offerings. The sacrifice of Christ answers to both. Hence he is denominated, "our peace," that is, our peace-offering; and he is also said to be "made sin," that is, "a sin-offering" for us.\* God is represented as being offended with us on account of our sins, and the death of Christ is represented as pacifying him, by bearing the punishment which we deserved. In this sense our sins were *laid upon him*—in this sense he *bore them*, and so procured our absolution, and reconciled us unto God.†

2. We are represented as, by nature, in *bondage* and *captivity* to sin and Satan; yea, as arrested and in the hands of justice. Answerable to which, the death of Christ is held forth as a ransom price; redeeming us, and procuring our liberty. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many." There is one mediator, who gave himself a ransom for all. And with this agrees the song of the general assembly and church of the first-born, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."‡

3. We are represented in scripture as *polluted* and *abominable*, by reason of sin. Answerable to this, the blood of Christ is held forth as a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness.§ And in this sacrificial sense, the apostle speaks of Christ's brethren as being sanctified by his offering.¶ In short, it is by faith in Christ's blood, that the conscience is purified from the guilt, and the heart from the love of sin.¶

4. The death of Christ is constantly held forth in scripture, as *the procuring cause of all spiritual and eternal blessings*. It was the ratification, or confirmation, of the new covenant, which was made upon his sacrifice, and dedicated with water and blood from his pierced side.\*\* Every new covenant blessing flows to us through this

\* Eph. ii. 14; 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Rom. v. 10, 11; Heb. ii. 17.

‡ Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Rev. v. 9. || Zech. xiii. 1; Rev. i. 5.

§ Heb. xiii. 12.

¶ Heb. x. 2; ch. ix. 14.

\*\* Heb. x. 14—18.

source. The forgiveness of sins—adoption into the family of God—the gift of the Holy Spirit—and the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance, are all made sure to the heirs of salvation by the blood of the everlasting covenant,\* and are all the purchase of the Saviour's death.

5. The death of Christ presents us with the highest manifestation of God's *opposition to sin*, and at the same time of his *love to the sinner*.

The blessed God has, in various ways, marked his displeasure against sin and the workers of iniquity. His wrath has been revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness, by the awful judgments, which, from time to time, he has inflicted both upon nations and individuals; but none of these, nor even the whole of them collectively, present us with such a display of his infinite opposition to sin, as the judgment inflicted upon his own Son, when HE stood as the representative of the guilty, and bore the punishment of their sins in his own body on the cross. When we think of the dignity of the person who suffered—that he was God's own, his well beloved Son—and reflect upon the nature and design of his sufferings, that they were the punishment, or curse, due to the sins of his people, and necessary to make an atonement to divine justice—surely nothing can give us so striking a manifestation of the purity of the divine nature, and of God's opposition to sin, as this does. Were it possible, that any meaner sacrifice could have expiated it, we are certain Jehovah would have spared his own Son. But such was his love to a guilty world, that in order to procure their salvation, he withheld not his greatest, his best of gifts, but “delivered him up for us all.” Well might an apostle say: “Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”† We know, indeed, that God is by nature, good, benevolent, and kind to his creatures; but he is also holy, just, and true—he cannot look upon sin, but with abhorrence; and it is

\* Heb. ix. 15–18.

† Rom. viii. 32; 1 John iv. 10.

only in the death of Christ, that we can know his character as the just God, and yet the Saviour of the guilty.

IV. We come now, lastly, to consider the improvement which we should make of this doctrine.

1. It may serve to convict the stout-hearted, and those who are far from righteousness, of the awful situation in which they stand, while in a state of enmity to God, and despising the gospel of his Son. Is it a fact, that Christ Jesus the Lord came down from heaven, to die for the sins of the guilty, according to the Scriptures? Then take a lesson from this, of the guilt, and consequent danger, of which you are the subject. Reflect, we beseech you, how aggravated must the evil of sin be, which required so costly a sacrifice to atone for it: and how great must God's hatred of sin be, who inflicted such dreadful sufferings on his own Son, in order to expiate it? Yet you can make light of it, and treat it, as if it were a thing to be trifled with. Beware, however, how you form your notions of sin, by the opinions of the world, or the dictates of your own depraved judgments. Study it, in the death of the Son of God, and be assured, that if you reject the Saviour, you will have to bear the punishment of your own transgressions, in a world where "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

2. The doctrine we have been considering, affords *a solid foundation of hope, to the most guilty sinner*—even to him who can find nothing about himself, but what marks him out as a fit object of the divine indignation. Here is the sovereign remedy, which must give relief to the conscience oppressed with a sense of guilt, and that the moment it is understood and believed, "CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by him, *all that believe*, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Seek not after qualifications to recommend you to Christ; "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that

is, to bring Christ down from above: or who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead?" Jesus, the true Messiah, the Christ of God, hath appeared; he came into the world to save sinners; he suffered, and died, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and now, repentance and the remission of sins are preached in his name, among all nations. This is the word of faith, first preached by the apostles: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus; and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.\*" Believe in the *all sufficiency of his blood*, to cleanse you from all sin. You cannot, indeed, have too deep a conviction of sin and its demerits; but know that the blood of Christ is more than sufficient to cleanse them. Remember, that it is the blood of the Son of God, "It is Christ that died"—it is the blood of "God manifest in the flesh," and therefore must be of infinite efficacy and value. Consider, that God hath testified his good pleasure in the death of his Son, by raising him again from the dead, and giving him glory at his own right hand in heaven. Call to your recollection, the many enormous sinners that have already been washed in his blood, and are now singing around his throne: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God, by his blood." And never forget this fact, that unbelief, or a rejection of the divine testimony, concerning Christ, is the only bar to your participation of the same blessedness.

3. The doctrine of the text affords the strongest motives to influence all who believe it, *to hate sin*. It presents it to our view in its true colours—as exceeding sinful—the object of God's highest displeasure—as that which his righteous soul hateth. And it also contains a powerful inducement to *love God*, who has manifested his love to sinful worms of the earth—to rebellious apostate creatures, so as not to spare his own Son for their sakes.—"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that

\* Rom. x. 6—9.

God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.\* Surely there is enough in this to lead those who believe it, to "love him, because he first loved us," and to live to his praise and glory in the world.

4. Consider, further, that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in fact, the brightest manifestation of the invisible God. In that scene of humiliation, of sorrow, and of suffering—that "great mystery of godliness," the last scene in which men would have looked for him, it pleased the Most High to lay bare his greatness. He unveiled in it the treasures of his wisdom, holiness, and goodness, and called an astonished world to behold their extent, and adore their glory. The divine character had, indeed, been partially revealed before; men had seen something of it in the works of creation and providence, and in the partial disclosures, which the great God had thought proper to make, of his purposes of grace and mercy towards our guilty, fallen race; and these had been the subject of admiration to the heavenly host; but they burst forth on the cross, with a radiance which dazzled the angels as they gazed on it, and excited among them a wonder that has never ceased. Accustomed, from the time of their creation, to all the magnificence of their heavenly dwelling-place, the palace of the great King, and familiarized to all the scenes of splendor it contains, they yet desire to look into this exhibition of the Godhead, and see in it a vastness which they can never measure—a fulness they can never grasp. As for man, enslaved by sin and blinded by the God of this world, he can pour contempt on any thing; but no sooner are the eyes of his understanding enlightened, than, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, he beholds the brightest manifestation, the highest display of the glory of the ever blessed God. It becomes at once the object of his study, the ground of his hope, the theme

\* 1 John iv. 9, 10, .

of his praise, and the source of his glorying. Language is inadequate to describe his feelings, as he contemplated it; they are feelings of unutterable admiration, and of more than earthly delight; feelings that will go with him into heaven, and can only be expressed in its songs.

5. To conclude,—the doctrine of the text ought to reach conviction to those persons, who are going about to establish their own righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance with God. This is to frustrate all the ends of Christ's death; for if justification can be obtained by the sinner's own obedience, Christ must have died in vain, which is contrary to all the doctrine of the prophets and apostles. If there had been a possibility of man's saving himself, why did Christ come in the flesh? The very end of his mission was to save sinners. He obeyed and suffered, in order that he might work out the justifying righteousness, which is unto and upon all that believe, without difference. Persons of this description can have no proper view of themselves, or of God, or of the requirements of his holy law. To them, the Saviour is without form or comeliness; they discern no beauty in him, wherefore they should desire him! May that Lord, who is rich in mercy, undeceive them on a point of such vital importance to their present peace and eternal welfare, direct the eyes of their minds to Calvary, and open their ears to the voice which now speaks to them from thence, in those gracious accents:—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and not man."—"Incline your ear, and come unto me; HEAR, AND YOUR SOUL SHALL LIVE."

## SERMON III.

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### THE ATTRACTIVE INFLUENCE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

John xii. 32.

WHEN the patriarch Jacob drew near the end of his pilgrimage, he called his sons around him, and foretold the advent of the Messiah in these words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until SHILOH come; and unto HIM shall the gathering of the people be."\* There are many other prophecies of a similar import; particularly Isaiah xi. 10; "And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an *ensign* of the people: to HIM shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." The words of our text are much to the same effect, but with this addition, that they show us, how all this was to be accomplished. Before we enter upon the consideration of them, however, it will be proper, that we notice the occasion on which they were spoken.

The miracles which the Son of God wrought, during his public ministry, occasioned his fame to spread abroad, and excited a strong desire in multitudes to see him. It was now the feast of the Passover, (ver. 1,) and Jesus, accompanied by his disciples, had arrived at Jerusalem, to celebrate that great annual festival. The evangelist in-

\* Gen. xlix. 10.



forms us, in ver. 20, that "there were among the Pharisees, certain Greeks," proselytes, it would seem, to the Jewish religion, "who had come up to worship at this feast," and had intimated to Philip, a wish to see his Divine Master. Philip mentioned the circumstance to his brother Andrew, and they, accordingly, proceeded in company, and communicated it to their blessed Lord, which drew from Him the words contained in ver. 23. "Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified;" in other words, the period was arrived, when He should be vested with supreme dominion, and glorified in the conversion and salvation of Gentiles, as well as Jews, agreeably to ancient prophecy.\* Our Lord, nevertheless, intimates, that he must first die, and rise again, before he could have a seed from among the Gentiles; and, therefore, he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;" ver. 24. The prophets, who had spoken so largely of the kingdom of the Messiah, had always connected it with his sufferings and death, and uniformly laid the latter as the foundation of it. The twenty-second Psalm, for instance, which sets before us the humiliation and deep abasement, to which the Saviour should submit in accomplishing the salvation of sinners, thus describes the glorious result of his sufferings: "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee;" i. e. the Messiah.—"A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation: they shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."† So, also, the prophet Isaiah: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."—"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."‡

\* Isa. xi. 10; ch. xlii. 4; and xlix. 6.

† Psalm xxii. 27—31.

‡ Isa. liii. 10, 11.

There was, therefore, a *necessity* for the Redeemer's death, and mighty ends were to be accomplished by it. It was necessary, in order to make an atonement for sin, and thereby reconcile sinners unto God.\* It was necessary, in order to abolish the old covenant, and thereby break down the middle wall of partition, which, during the continuance of that covenant, had separated the Jews and the Gentiles, blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances which was contrary to the latter, and so taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.† It was necessary, in order to defeat and overturn the empire of Satan, the prince of this world so that, by means of his own death, our Redeemer might destroy him who had the power of death, enslaving the gentile world;‡—in short, the death of Christ was necessary, in order to establish the New Covenant with the elect of all nations, consisting in the remission of sins, through faith in his blood.||

Such, then, were the important ends that were to be accomplished by the death of the Son of God; and to illustrate the fruits of his death, he adopts the similitude of a grain of wheat, (ver. 24.) which, “unless it fall into the ground and die, abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” And so the divine Substitute encourages himself in the words of my text, with an anticipation of the glorious effects of his death, in the overthrow of Satan's kingdom, and drawing numerous converts to himself:—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

With a view to illustrate these words, what I intend is—First, to explain some of the terms contained in the text;—then, to consider the wonderfully attractive object alluded to—Christ, the Son of God, lifted up upon the cross. We shall next examine its power and influence on the minds of such as are enlightened to behold it. And, lastly,—Improve the subject.

\* 2 Cor. v. 19.

‡ Heb. ii. 14.

† Eph. ii. 14—16; Col. ii. 14.

|| Heb. viii.

I. I remark, that when the Lord Jesus speaks of himself as being "*lifted up from the earth,*" he evidently refers to the manner of his death, which was that of *crucifixion*. The same expression occurs in other parts of the writings of this evangelist—as in that memorable discourse, which Christ held with Nicodemus, John iii. 14.—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be *lifted up.*” So also in ch. viii. 28.—“When ye have *lifted up* the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am HE.” But, indeed, the evangelist has not left us in any doubt as to the meaning of the expression in our text; for having given our Lord’s words, he immediately adds, “this he said, signifying what death he should die,” ver. 33. Again,

“*Drawing*”, here, does not denote any compulsive, or coercive force, by means of which violence is used to the will of man. It simply means a *persuasive* influence, reaching conviction to the understanding, subduing the will, and gaining over the heart and affections, which is the import of the term in many other places. Thus, the spouse, in the Canticles, for instance: “Draw me; we will run after thee.”\* And thus the Lord speaks, by the mouth of the prophet Hosea: “I *drew them*, with cords of a man, with bands of love;”† that is, with cords suited to the rational nature of man. And so also Christ explains the nature of this drawing, when he tells the Jews—“No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, *draw* him,”—adding, “It is written in the prophets: “And they shall be all *taught of God*; every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”‡ All which is in perfect harmony with the words of the Psalmist: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”|| Further,—

\* Song i. 4.  
‡ John vi. 44, 45.

† Hos. xi. 4.  
|| Psalm cx. 3.

The term, "*all men*," does not intend all the children of men, but some *men of all nations*; in which acceptation the phrase frequently occurs in the New Testament, and so it stands opposed to the Jewish limitation, whereby they would exclusively restrict the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom to their own nation; whereas, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him," whether "Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free," "should not perish, but have eternal life."\* The meaning of the text, therefore, may be summed up in this proposition:—"That the death of Christ, was not only to be the atoning sacrifice for sin, and the ransom price of man's redemption; but it was also to be the most powerful means of gaining sinners to the faith, love, and obedience, of the gospel—it was to be the grand attractive in drawing converts to Himself." We now proceed,

II. To consider the wonderfully attractive object adverted to in the text. But, *What is that object?* It is Jesus of Nazareth, lifted up from the earth, and nailed to the cross—an object of pity, disgrace, and horror, to the carnal eye! Such, indeed, it was to the unbelieving Jews, who actually beheld him in that state; and such has the report of "Christ crucified," been to thousands in every age, since the event took place. Never was there an object about which mankind, universally, are so much divided, as about this. The unbelieving eye can see "neither form nor comeliness in it, nor the least beauty wherefore it should be desired;" while to such as are divinely enlightened to understand its import, and behold its grandeur, nothing is more glorious. One portion of the human race is astonished to think what it is, that others can behold so wonderfully attractive in it; while the other equally wonders, how the rest

\* John iii. 16.

of the world are so infatuated, as not to see its excellency. So it was with the apostle Paul. While the scales of ignorance were upon his mind, he thought as degradingly of the Saviour as any of his unbelieving countrymen could do, or as any infidel of our own day can now do; but when the scales dropt from his eyes, or, as he himself expresses it, “when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him,” he was utterly amazed at his own former blindness—for now, no object was so honourable and glorious in his estimation. Happy for us, if the case be so with ourselves; for “blessed is he,” said the Saviour, in the days of his humiliation, “whosoever shall not be offended in me.”\* Let us, however, draw near to this object—let us approach to Calvary, and enquire,

1. WHO IS THE PERSON that is nailed to yonder tree, pouring out his soul unto death, under every circumstance of the deepest humiliation, disgrace, and suffering? We have the answer to this question, in the Father’s voice from the excellent glory:—“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.” Yes, that object of scorn, derision, and contumely, though now the subject of such intense and complicated suffering, is no other than “the word, who, in the beginning was with God, and was God.” HE, by whom “all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.”† He is “God over all, and blessed for ever.”‡ Behold, then, the Creator of the world, hanging upon a cross, and expiring as a malefactor; or, in the language of the poet, “expended Deity on human weal.”||

But it may be objected, that the *divine* nature is immortal, and the fountain of life; the divine nature could not suffer:—and this leads me to enquire

\* Matth. xi. 6. † John i. 1, 2; Col. i. 16. ‡ Rom. ix. 5

|| Night Thoughts, Night iv.

2. How was it possible that this divine person could be lifted up, and suffer death upon the cross? The apostle Paul has satisfactorily answered this enquiry: "Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."\* Thus we learn, that the Eternal Word was made flesh, or became incarnate. He was made a little while lower than the angels, by assuming human nature, in order to suffer death, or that, by the grace of God, he might taste death for every man.† And this is the "great mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory."‡ This scriptural account of the matter, not only solves the difficulty respecting *his capacity for suffering*; but it opens up to our view, a new source of admiration and wonder, in reference to the ends of Christ's sufferings, as we shall presently see. But before we take our leave of this branch of the subject, I would add a few words on a point connected with it.

I said just now, that the divine nature being immortal, and the fountain of life, is incapable of either death or suffering; and that the Eternal Word assumed human nature, in order that he might become "obedient unto death." Are we, then, to view the sufferings of the Saviour, as those of a mere man?—or, to put the subject in another view—when we hear the Son of God, crying out upon the cross, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Are we to consider that the divine nature had withdrawn itself, in such a sense, as to leave *humanity* to bear the load of human guilt, and make atonement for the sins of the world? Now, this is a question,

\* Phil. ii. 6, 9. † John i. 14; Heb. ii. 9. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

which has perplexed the minds of many sincere Christians, and I think we must all admit, that it ought to be approached by us, with great modesty and diffidence. Alas, how easy is it for us to darken counsel by words without knowledge! The hypostatical union, as it is termed in our systems of divinity—that is, the union of the divine and human natures, in the person of our Emmanuel, is a *mystery*, which the human faculties were never fitted to explore; it is a mystery, into which the angels themselves stoop down to look, with adoring wonder! Like the doctrine of a Trinity of persons, in the one undivided Godhead or divine nature, it far transcends our comprehension, and we must receive the subject, just as it is delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, without seeking to be wise above what is written.

Still, some of my hearers may be disposed to ask, “What is it that the Scriptures do teach upon the subject?” I answer, they do teach us, that He who was crucified in weakness, was “God over all, and blessed for ever,”—Rom. ix. 5; that God “purchased the church with his own blood,”—Acts xx. 28; in other words, that he who laid down his life for the sheep, was truly a divine person, Emmanuel, God in our nature. But though the Lord Jesus Christ was God and man in one person; yet it would seem to be only in that nature, in which he was one with his brethren, that he suffered; and the apostle states this to be one great end of his taking that nature upon him: “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death,” &c.—Heb. ii. 14. And so he says in the same chapter. “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour,” &c.—ver. 9. Observe, also, how this subject is set before us, in Heb. x. 5—10. A body was prepared for the Eternal Word, in the womb of the virgin, which body

was offered up upon the cross, as a sacrifice for the sins of men. Hence, it appears, that while the soul and body, or in other words, the whole human nature of Christ, was *the offering*; his divine nature was *the altar* on which it was offered up, and from whence it derived its efficacious virtue, agreeably to the words of the apostle: "Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered *himself* without spot, unto God."—Heb. ix. 14. It was the divine dignity of his person, that gave infinite value and efficacy to his sufferings, and rendered them an adequate atonement for the sins of all his brethren; in which atonement, God is for ever well pleased. It was God's own Son *himself*, that suffered—it was *divine* blood, that was shed; but still it was the blood of his humanity, which was himself, by virtue of its personal union with him. These things, I humbly conceive, the Scriptures teach us, and they are sufficient for all the purposes of our salvation; let us receive them with meekness, and be thankful for such information as is communicated, without curiously prying into things above our reach. From this digression, we now return to consider

3. What was the *end* and *design* of this stupendous proceeding—the crucifixion of the Son of God. And the only account which the oracles of God give us of the matter is, that it was the method which infinite wisdom devised for accomplishing the redemption and salvation of guilty mortals. Let us listen to the apostle Paul, unfolding this great mystery to the Hebrews: "It became Him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—"Forasmuch then as the children were partakers of flesh and blood; he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. For verily,



he took not hold of the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he took hold: wherefore in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren: that he might be a merciful, and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”\* The prophet Isaiah had long before given the very same account of the sufferings of the Messiah, when he said: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows—He was wounded for our transgressions—bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him, the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken off by an oppressive judgment—for he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was smitten to death.”†

Such is the account which both prophets and apostles give us of the sufferings and death of the Son of God; and it is this view of the subject, which brings it closely home to ourselves;—it presents to our view, deliverance from the greatest misery, and the bestowment of the greatest blessings, which we are capable of enjoying—peace with God; the forgiveness of sin; adoption into his family; the enjoyment of the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter; and—when we have finished our pilgrimage here below, and passed through death—the resurrection of our bodies from the grave, and the possession of eternal life in the kingdom of the Father. Here, also, we contemplate, the awful and aggravated *evil of sin*, and learn the dreadful state into which it has plunged our whole race—a state, which required

\* Heb. ii. 9, 10, 11—17. † Isa. liii. 4—10. *Bishop Louth's trans.*

such a sacrifice, as the shedding of the heart's blood of God's own Son, a person of infinite dignity and worth—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Surely, if any thing can give us just notions of God, so as to make us fear him, and at the same time, lead us to hope in his mercy, it must be a view of "Christ crucified." And this will lead us to consider,

III. The power and influence of this object on the minds of such as are enlightened to behold it with the eye of faith. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw all men unto me.*"

The words, we see, contain a *promise*, that such should be the blessed effects of his death, in all succeeding ages; and this naturally leads us to enquire how, or by what means, this promise is accomplished. We all admit, that men cannot be affected or influenced by what they do not know. And it is upon this principle, that the apostle puts the question: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?"\*

This at once points out to us the necessity of a preached gospel, in order that the *report* of the Saviour's death might be sounded abroad throughout the nations. And, accordingly, Christ, before he left the world, commanded, that his gospel should be preached unto all nations; "Go ye into all the world," said Jesus to his apostles, "and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."† "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."‡

\* Rom. x. 14. † Mark xvi. 15, 16. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

The exalted head of the church, the king of Zion, has made provision for perpetuating the knowledge of the Truth after the decease of his holy apostles, even to the remotest period of time. So the apostle Paul tells the Ephesians, ch. iv.: "He ascended on high, that he might give gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Thus we see that, in order to carry into effect the ends of his death, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all authority and power is given, both in heaven and on earth, hath appointed the stated ministration of his gospel, as the grand means of conveying to the perishing children of men, "the knowledge of salvation, by the remission of their sins;" and he has pledged himself to accompany the preaching of it, with his own effectual blessing, until time shall end. And so it pleases God, by what the Scribes and disputers of this world denominate, "the *foolishness* of preaching," to save them that believe.\* The Jews required a sign, (the interposition of heaven, by some miraculous work, striking their senses, and forcing conviction;) and the Greeks sought after wisdom, (they were for embellishing the doctrine of the cross, by the aids of philosophy.)—But the apostles preached "Christ crucified;" to the Jews, a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them that were called, both Jews and Greeks, this doctrine proved the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to their salvation.† Nor did the apostles need any other; they exhibited their report of this fact, as the testimony of God, and were determined to make known nothing else, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.‡

And what were the effects produced by their preaching? Why, "the hand and power of God every where

\* 1 Cor. i. 21. † 1 Cor. i. 22—24. ‡ ch. ii. 2.

accompanied the word spoken, so that many believed, and turned to the Lord." In every country into which the gospel came, thousands were drawn by the bare report of this wonderful event—the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory; drawn from a state of mental darkness, of idolatry, superstition, and vice; from a state of slavery to Satan, the god of this world, and of enmity to the true God—they were drawn to CHRIST, to believe in him, to love him, to trust him for all their salvation, to live to him, and to suffer for his sake. They were brought to experience peace with God—the enjoyment of his love, through the power of his Spirit, and made happy in the hope of eternal life; and such has been the case in every age, from the days of the apostles until now.

“ Sinners, like beasts of savage name,  
Put on the nature of the Lamb!  
While the wide world esteem it strange,  
Gaze and admire, and hate the change.”

Nor, if we look a little closely into the matter, shall we find much to surprise us, that such effects resulted from the simple preaching of the doctrine of the cross. For, when accompanied by the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, it is divinely adapted to produce these effects, as the following considerations may serve to show.

1. It is admitted on all hands, I believe, that it is *faith*, which unites the soul to Christ. But, is not Christ's death upon the cross, the strongest possible *persuasive* to faith in him? To be satisfied of this fact, let it be considered, that this event is the fulfilment of a long train of Old Testament prophecies. Do we not know, that “the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testified beforehand, the sufferings of the Messiah, and the glory that should follow?”\* We have already

\* 1 Pet. i. 11.

had occasion to notice, in this discourse, that He is uniformly held forth in the law and the prophets, as a suffering person.\* And what can be a stronger persuasive to faith in Christ, than to behold the circumstantial accomplishment of all these predictions, in the things that befel him at Jerusalem. But the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is also a confirmation of the truth of the doctrines which he himself preached, during his public ministry: for, he repeatedly foretold his own death, and the manner of it, which ought to confirm our faith in him, as the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners.—His death is also a confirmation of the truth of the promises which he has left us upon record; for, if we believe, that Jesus died and rose again, we must believe also, that he will come again the second time, without a sin-offering, to perfect the salvation of all who believe in him. And when we view his death, as it is invariably held forth in the writings of the holy apostles and prophets, as the appointed sacrifice for the sins of the guilty, and behold him rising again from the dead, on the third day; his resurrection gives us the strongest possible ground of assurance, that He is the Son of God, and that he will judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom.† His death upon the cross, therefore, is a powerful persuasive to faith in him—and, by necessary consequence, of drawing the soul to him.

2. *Are love and grace powerful attractives?*—are they motives to conciliate esteem, gain over the affections, and win the hearts of sinful mortals? Behold, then, in the cross of Christ, they appear in their highest lustre. Consider what an influence they had on the apostle Paul, as he contemplated them in the mirror of the cross. His exclamation was: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby

\* Psalm xxii; and xl; Isa. liii; Dan. ix; Zech. xiii. 7. † 2 Tim. iv. 1.

the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”\* The love thus manifested by the Saviour, in dying for the guilty, constrained him thus to judge, “that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.† Another apostle says: “Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us.”‡ This love is truly said, to surpass all knowledge: there is a breadth, and length, and depth, and height in it, which never can be fathomed. It fills the holy angels with amazement; and if so, what effects ought it to produce on those who are the special objects of it!

3. Permit me to ask once more,—“*Are our own interests and happiness any attractives?*—Is there any thing in the consideration of these things, calculated to touch the springs of action in the human heart? If so, then there is every thing in this wonderful object to draw us to Christ. Let us reflect upon the many, the great, the unspeakable blessings, which flow unto the sinful sons and daughters of men, through His mediation. By his death upon the cross, we have peace with God; for thus runs the divine record: “He hath made peace through the blood of his cross,” and thereby procured our reconciliation unto God.‡—The pardon of sin flows to us, only through the channel of his atoning blood—for “our sins are forgiven us for his name’s sake.”—“We have redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”—Eph. i. 7. Is it a privilege to be adopted into the family of heaven, to become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—to be allowed free access to a throne of grace, with liberty of speech to pour out our hearts, with the confidence of children to a father? this blessing is enjoyed only through faith in him, “for ye are all the children of

\* Gal. vi. 14. † 2 Cor. v. 14. ‡ Col. i. 20.  
|| 2 Cor. v. 18.

God," says the apostle, "through faith in Christ Jesus." But, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus:"\* or, as the apostle writes on another occasion,—“because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God, through Christ.”† And to say all in a word, “grace reigns through righteousness, in the gift of eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”‡

I. Let this subject be improved by those, who, through grace, have believed in Christ, in the way of confirming their faith and hope. We have seen, that the crucifixion of Christ is the accomplishment of a series of Old Testament types and shadows, which constituted a considerable part of the Levitical institution, as well as of numerous predictions scattered throughout the writings of the prophets. 'Tis, therefore, with great propriety, that the poet has said—

The types bore witness to his name,  
Obtain'd their chief design, and ceas'd,  
The incense and the bleeding lamb  
The ark, the altar, and the priest

Predictions in abundance join,  
To pour their witness on his head:  
Jesus, we bow before thy throne,  
And own thee as the promis'd Seed.

2. The subject we have been considering, is well calculated to raise our admiration of the wisdom and grace of God, manifested in the plan of redemption. The doctrine of Christ crucified has, in every age, been a stumbling block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek; yet, after all, it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The religion of Jesus is essentially different from every

\* Rom. viii. 15      † Gal. iv. 5—7.      ‡ Rom. v. 21.

other religion in the world. Other religions may abound with superstitious rites, to engage the vulgar, or with refined systems of morality, to amuse the speculative. They may set forth the intrinsic beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice, with the happiness attending the one, and the misery entailed on the other. But where was a system of religion ever found in the world, so framed as to derive its chief influence from the death of its author? This is the leading peculiarity, the grand distinguishing characteristic, of the religion of Jesus. To the wise of this world, to the scribe and the disputer, it appears a scheme of things alike foolish and weak; but the wisdom of God and the power of God, are indelibly impressed upon it; for while it makes provision for the eternal happiness of myriads of the human race, and that in a consistency with the claims of justice, and the honours of the divine government, it humbles the sinner to the very dust, and glorifies God in the highest possible degree.

3. This subject ought to reach conviction to those who have heard the gospel, and yet remain in impenitence and unbelief. What is the voice, in which the transactions of Calvary now address you? It is this—"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return—That, unto me, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess. Surely, shall one say, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;' even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him, shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."\* Remember that He who was crucified in weakness, now liveth by the power of God. You are now invited to look to him, as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world: but if you harden your heart, and turn a deaf ear to

\* Is. xlv. 22--25.



him that now speaketh to you from heaven; if in this the day of your merciful visitation you despise the offers of his grace—he will speedily arise as “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah;” and what will be his language then?—What can you expect but this—“Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” “Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before my face.” “Kiss the Son, then, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”—Psalm. ii. 12.

Behold th' amazing sight !  
 The Saviour lifted high !  
 Behold the Son of God's delight  
 Expire in agony !

For love of us he bled,  
 And all in torture died ;  
 'Twas love that bow'd his fainting head,  
 And op'd his gushing side.

We see, and we adore,  
 Nor can resist such love ;  
 We feel its strong attractive power  
 To lift our souls above.

Drawn by such cords as these,  
 The saints must all combine,  
 With cheerful ardour to confess  
 The energy divine.

In thee our hearts unite,  
 Nor share thy griefs alone,  
 But from thy cross pursue their flight,  
 To thy triumphant throne.

## SERMON IV.

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### THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

*But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him,  
and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus.*

Eph. iv. 20—21.

LOOKING back to the beginning of this chapter, we find the apostle had been exhorting the Ephesians to the exercise of lowliness, meekness, and long-suffering, and to forbear one another in love; duties incumbent upon them, if they would walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—ver. 1—3. He then proceeds to state those great catholic Christian unities, wherein all the children of God are one.—ver. 4—6; together with that variety of gifts, which, though differing in their exercise, have all one common end, namely, to build up the church of God; or, as he says, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”—ver. 12. And, in opposition to that state of pupilage, as one may term it, being all brought into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, that they should henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but that, speaking the truth in love, they might grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ.—ver. 14, 15. And here, it deserves to be remarked

by the way, that, the apostle points out, not merely the duty of teachers, or those who have gifts for the pastoral office ; but, he enforces it, as a duty, common to the brethren at large—that they should speak the truth in love, and so grow up into Him in all things, who is their head, even Christ. And he exhorts them to this, in order that they might make progress in the Christian profession, and evince by the purity and sanctity of their lives, the truth of their holy religion. He solemnly warns them, henceforth, not to walk as other Gentiles walked, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart ; of whom he testifies, that being past feeling, they had given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Now, it is in opposition to this, that he says in the words of our text—“But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

It is evident, that the apostle is here writing to Christians, or professors of the Christian faith ; and he supposes it was no more certain that they were real believers in Christ, than as they gave evidence, that they were delivered from the predominance and prevalence of those lusts, which animate and influence the men of the world. In this, true Christians must be distinguished from all others, whether false professors or the ungodly who scoff at all religion, by the holiness and purity of their conversation, in cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. For, the apostle after having said, “ye have not so learned Christ;” adds, “if so be that ye have heard and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” It is not every one that professes the Christian faith, nor is it every one who can recite a sound creed, that has really heard Christ and been taught by him, “as the truth is in Jesus;”—and this is made abundantly manifest,

by their not falling under the influence of that doctrine, as it sanctifies the heart and affections, and conforms to the image of Christ, so as to be delivered from the love, and power, and practice of sin. Now, says the apostle, "if ye have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, ye have not so learned Christ," as to indulge in these things. It is impossible that can be the case, for "the grace of God, which brings salvation, teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, and soberly, and godly, in this present evil world." Yet, it is not a little astonishing to see, with what affront men will profess themselves Christians, whilst they are walking after the course of this world! Even the most vicious and dissolute would consider it a very great affront to be told, they were not Christians. The name is now prostituted to men in general, who live, in what is called, a Christian country; and thus it loses its discriminating character, having no relation at all to that for which the disciples of Christ were primarily distinguished by that name. To illustrate the words of the text, I propose to shew:—

What the apostle here intends, by *the TRUTH*, as it is in Jesus. And—To examine the leading qualities and characteristic properties of this truth, whereby it may be known and distinguished from all other truths or doctrines. I shall then shew the necessity of divine teaching, in order to a person's knowing and falling under its influence.

I. *THE TRUTH*, of which the apostle is speaking in the words of the text, is nothing more than the doctrine of the Bible, concerning Christ and his salvation. This is that truth which began, more obscurely, at first, to be revealed in the early ages of the world, and which, by an increasing light and manifestation through successive generations, is now fully revealed in the New Testament dispensation. It is that great truth, of which the whole law of Moses, with all its types and ceremonies, was but a shadow. It is that grand and interesting truth which

formed the subject matter of Old Testament prophecy, for “to it gave all the prophets witness;” and a declaration of this truth is a declaration that, “the promise which God made unto the fathers, by the prophets, is now accomplished unto their children.” What is the Gospel, but a declaration that these promises, concerning the Messiah, are now accomplished—that the seed is come, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed—that God hath visited and redeemed his people, and raised up a horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David—that he has performed the mercy promised unto the fathers, and remembered his holy covenant? This is what is called the glad tidings of the Gospel; and this is, by way of eminence, generally termed, *the TRUTH*, in the New Testament.

Jesus Christ came to bear witness of this truth. “For this cause,” says he, “came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth: every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”\* He died a martyr to this very truth; being accused of blasphemy, for claiming to be the Son of God.† This truth includes in it, a declaration concerning his kingdom, that it is not of this world, which was the good confession he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, and of which the apostle speaks so pointedly in his first letter to Timothy.‡ It includes a declaration of the dignity of that glorious person, who came into the world to accomplish the work of redemption—that he is the Messiah, the Christ, or Anointed one—the Son of God—a divine person and character. The New Testament abounds with testimonies to his dignity and glory. We are told that it is HE, who, in the beginning, was with God, and was God—the same by whom all things were made—that he who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, was, “over all, God blessed for ever;”||—that “he is God manifest in the flesh, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” In short, the New Testament

\* John xviii. 37.

† Mark xiv. 61.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 13.

|| John 1. 1—3; Col. i. 16; Rom. ix 5.

abounds with the most sublime and lofty descriptions of his personal dignity; and with regard to his official characters, it holds him forth as the great Prophet, Priest, and King of his church. It declares what he has done for the salvation of perishing sinners—that for this end he took upon him the nature of the children whom God had given him to redeem, “that through death, he might destroy him who had the power of death, even the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.”\*

Further, this truth testifies of the miracles which Jesus wrought, in confirmation of his divine mission—the doctrines which he taught during his own personal ministry—and it, in an especial manner, testifies of his death, as the great atoning sacrifice for sin—and of his resurrection from the dead, as the grand argument, evidence, and demonstration, of the perfection of his work, and of the divine good pleasure therein. And, hence, our faith is particularly called to this—that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God—that “he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” So that, “if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”† Moreover, this is that truth which the Father testified from heaven, when there came a voice from the excellent glory, declaring, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.”‡ To this same truth the Holy Spirit bore witness, when it was declared by the apostles in their preaching, and that with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of supernatural gifts, according to the will of God.¶ In this truth all the divine Three unite their testimony, and, therefore, it is emphatically termed, *the TRUTH*. In fine, it includes in it a declaration of the blessings which Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, hath procured for all that believe

\* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

† Rom. iv. 24, 28; ch. x. 9.

‡ Matt. xvii. 5.

¶ Heb. ii. 4.

in HIM—that “there is redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,”—that believing in Him, we enjoy the spirit of adoption, and are made the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—that, through him, believers are made conquerors, and more than conquerors, he being the resurrection and the life, who, as the forerunner of his people, has, in their name, taken possession of an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Now, to sum up these various particulars, we may say, that THE TRUTH, which the apostle treats of in the text, comprehends the whole doctrine concerning Christ Jesus the Lord—his character, work, and salvation, with the blessings which he has procured for the children of men. They are all included in this TRUTH, which the apostles sometimes sum up in a few words, and at other times, open and enlarge upon as the occasion and circumstances required. We shall now,

II. Consider the leading features and characteristic properties of this truth, or doctrine, whereby it stands conspicuously distinguished from all others.

The generality of persons in this country profess to believe the Gospel; and yet, when they come to explain themselves, we find they are very far from being agreed as to what the Gospel is. Christians, or professed Christians, in our day, are greatly divided about almost every part of the system of divine truth which constitutes the Gospel. Indeed, it is manifest that those divisions began to take place very early, and that they still continue in the world. It may be useful, therefore, to consider a few of the discriminating features and characteristic properties, whereby this truth may be distinguished from all others, that have been propagated in the world. And here I remark

1. That this truth *exhibits the most full and consistent view of the character of the blessed God, that is any where to be found.*

In this point of view, every scheme of religion, which the

wit or wisdom of man has devised, sinks into insignificance in comparison of it. True, indeed, the works of God discover to us much of his glory. The heavens, as the Psalmist tells us, declare the glory of God, and the firmament displays the workmanship of the Most High. All his works pronounce his praise. They exhibit his wisdom, power, and goodness; and so far as this discovery goes, it is a just and proper discovery of God. The Gospel does not set aside any of the ways, whereby the adorable Creator really communicates the knowledge of himself to his rational creatures. But, then, it is evident, that in all his works of creation and providence, there is not such a full discovery of all his glorious perfections, so as to exhibit the whole of them harmonizing with each other, as is to be found in the work of Christ made known in the Gospel. The faces of the heavens and the earth could never tell us how it was consistent with the divine Justice and Holiness—with the purity and sanctity of the divine law, for God to pardon and receive into his favour a guilty rebel. The whole creation must here stand mute, unable to give a satisfactory answer to this most interesting question. It is possible, no doubt, for men to form some such conjecture from the manifestation of the divine benevolence in his providential dealings with the children of men. But, then, at best, it is but a presumption resting on no solid basis, and, therefore, ill-calculated to afford solid peace and satisfaction to the mind of a guilty sinner. In short, to represent him as the just God and yet the Saviour,—this was a discovery of the divine character, which never could be fully ascertained from reason, or the light of nature, however much men might wish for it. They could know it only from the Gospel of the grace of God—"the truth as it is in Jesus."

The Lord formerly declared his name to Moses, and made his glory to pass before him; and he did it in such words as these: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the



guilty.”\* In this declaration of mercy and forgiveness in the divine name, it does not appear how it was consistent with the holiness and justice of the moral Governor of the world to clear the guilty. It was reserved for the Gospel to lay open this matter; and there, indeed, it is disclosed in the fullest and clearest manner—“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; for he hath made him to be a sin-offering for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”† By the transferring of guilt, from the sinner to his substitute, a wonderful expedient is found for reconciling the claims of justice, with the exercise of mercy to the guilty. And where do we behold such a display of divine justice, as in God’s executing vengeance on the person of his beloved Son, when he stood in the room of the guilty! And, on the other hand, where do we see such a discovery of love, as in this very view of the sufferings of Christ!—in contemplating his substitution in the room of the guilty, and in what he endured when he bore their sins in his own body on the cross, displaying in the highest possible degree, his exceeding grace and love to sinners! Indeed, the apostle speaks of it, as if it were no where else to be seen: it rises so superior to every other discovery of the divine love: “Herein,” says he, “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”‡ There is no point of view in which we can see that love so great, so manifest, as in this very point of view wherein we behold the highest exercise of divine justice. What man, or angel, could have contrived such a scheme, thus to exhibit the divine character in all its glory, and where none of the divine perfections are diminished, but where each shines forth in the greatest lustre?

This, then, is one leading characteristic of the “truth, as it is in Jesus,” and whereby it stands distinguished from all others—that it exhibits the most full and consistent view

\* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

† 2 Cor. v. 19—21.

‡ Rom. v. 8.

of the character of God that is any where to be found. All false religions, and all schemes invented by man, detract from the perfection of the divine character. They either overlook the perfection of the divine law; or they exalt his justice, whilst they have little to say of his grace. Every otherscheme of religion but that of the Gospel, gives a false representation of the true God. It is herein that his glory shines in full splendour, no one attribute of Deity eclipsing the rest, but all blazing forth with equal lustre. The divine glory is manifested in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. In Him all the Father's glory shines forth without the smallest diminution of its lustre; and that lustre is displayed in the work of redemption, of which he is the author; for therein Jehovah hath given the fullest manifestation of his glory. This, then, is a distinguishing characteristic of "the, truth as it is in Jesus." But I go on to remark,

2. It is another striking feature in this truth, that it is the only doctrine ever made known among men, that is adapted to *humble the proud heart of a guilty sinner*, and at the same time, to *cherish his hope in the divine mercy*.

The connexion between these two things is not easily made out by those who are ignorant of the Scriptures; I mean, how a poor rebellious worm of the earth should be humbled to the dust—that he should be made to despair of relief from any thing that he himself can do, and yet to have his hope of salvation fixed upon an immoveable basis, which can never fail. Yet, such is the effect of a knowledge of the "truth as it is in Jesus." There is no doctrine that humbles the sinner like this. Man is, by nature, a proud, vain, self-righteous creature, seeking acceptance with God, as it were, in virtue of some fancied goodness about himself. But all who are divinely taught to know this truth, are, by means of the discoveries which it makes of their own state and character, brought to despair of any thing in the way of good works. By the testimony which it bears against their personal guilt, it stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world guilty before God. They,

consequently, are led to view themselves as vile transgressors, not only in this and that particular instance, but as sinners, throughout—defiled to the very core, and as having nothing to plead but with the publican—“God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Persons who are ignorant of this truth, will naturally suppose, that to entertain such humbling views of themselves as have been now described, must bring them into a situation that will render them miserable indeed; but the case is far otherwise. It only reduces the sinner to the ground of hope, that is exhibited in the Gospel; and to this he must be brought, before he can partake of the relief which it is designed to afford. We must be brought to despair of every other way of relief, before we can fully come to the Saviour, so as to take comfort from his atoning blood. We must be beat off, as it were, from every other ground of confidence in the divine presence, ere we can put our full trust in the Saviour, so as to glory only in the Lord, having no confidence in the flesh.

Now, the truth, of which we are treating, reveals Christ Jesus the Lord, as an Almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, to those who see nothing in or about themselves to recommend them to the divine favour. And this is another distinguishing mark of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” showing us how it stands opposed to the spirit of all false doctrine, which ever places the sinner’s hope, in one way or other, upon his own imperfect righteousness. But we never can enjoy a well grounded hope towards God, until we are brought off from our own self-confidence, and made to lie low at the footstool of divine mercy. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him.” And it is added, “in those that hope in his mercy.”\* Thus, believers have their consolation in this truth—nay, they rejoice in it—for while it inspires them with humility, and abases them in the divine presence, it presents them with a source of everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. Hence, their

\* Psalm cxlvii. 1.

language is, "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake.\* We see all this exemplified in the apostle Paul. No sooner does he begin to speak of his former unregenerate state, than he lays himself low in the dust, confesses his vileness, and takes shame and confusion of face to himself, whilst he is led to commend the sovereignty, riches, and freedom of that grace, which was to him a never failing source of hope and consolation.† And so it is with all who know "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is in its very nature divinely calculated to humble the sinner—to bring him off from all confidence in himself, and at the same time to comfort him upon a foundation that is wholly and entirely without him, but which is presented to him in the Gospel. And this leads me to remark, further,

3. Another distinguishing characteristic of this truth, namely, that *it has Christ for its sum and centre—its Alpha and Omega*; it is THE TRUTH, the apostle tells us, "*as it is in Jesus.*" And this description of it imports, not only that it is the truth testified by Jesus, but, also, that it is the truth *concerning Him*. HE is the great centre of it—the point in which all its lines meet. Take Christ out of the Gospel scheme, and there is no Gospel at all. The whole is reduced to a state of chaos and confusion: there is no coherence, no concurrence in any of its parts. Jesus is the "all in all" in this truth. All the lines of divine revelation meet in him, and point the eye of the mind to HIM, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And, therefore, it is distinguished from all other doctrines, that can stand, as it were, on their own ground, or which, at least, may make use of Christ, now and then, only to fill up some particular corner of it.

The word of God teaches us, that the elect were chosen in Christ before the world began.‡—that he came into the world to save those whom the Father had given him; and that he laid down his life for them.|| It represents Christ

\* Ps. cxv. 1.    † 1 Tim. i. 13; Phil. iii.    ‡ Eph. i. 4.    || John x. 11

in all that he did, and in all the blessings which he procured, as acting a voluntary part; and it represents those blessings as treasured up in him, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; and, moreover, that it is out of his fulness, that believers receive even grace for grace.\* Take away Christ, then, from the view of the believer, and you leave him nothing but a blank—he feels his whole soul, as it were, unbinged in every thing. This is the peculiar characteristic, then, of this great truth, that Christ is all in all in it; and that it is from HIM, that all the children of God derive every spiritual blessing. Hence, all the good and all the happiness which they enjoy is founded upon the faith of Him, from whom they receive all spiritual blessings—the forgiveness of sins—the adoption of children—the gift of the Holy Spirit—victory over all their enemies—and a blessed resurrection to eternal life. This is a delightful topic, and deserves a little amplification. I observe, therefore, that,

Christ Jesus is set forth in the Gospel, as our great Prophet, or as made of God unto us wisdom; and all true wisdom is derived from Christ. Again, considering ourselves as sinners, what is the ground of our acceptance with God? It is, that Christ is made unto us righteousness; and in this point of view, he is the alone ground of our glorying for righteousness and sanctification. And, further, when we consider ourselves as mortal beings, appointed to death, we glory in him as made unto us redemption from the power of the grave, to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness with himself, in the kingdom of the Father. So that, he is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—our all in all. And this is the case with all those that have been taught the “truth as it is in Jesus.”

Conformably to what has been said on this subject, we find that the preaching of the Gospel is termed, the preaching of Christ, and him crucified. And so important was this theme in the apostle’s estimation, that he declared to

\* John i. 14—16

the Corinthians, he was determined to make known nothing else among them. He, indeed, knew that doctrine to be very obnoxious to the proud hearts of sinful mortals; it was to the Jew a stumbling-block; and to the Greek foolishness; nevertheless, the apostle gloried in it, in that very point of view in which it was condemned both by Jews and Greeks: and so it is with all those that have learned "the truth as it is in Jesus." And our Lord supposes this in his prayer to the Father, when he says, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." It is the faith, or belief of this truth, that excites love to God. It is the faith of this which worketh by love, and overcomes the world. Every holy temper produced upon the mind is ascribed to this truth, accompanied by the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit giving it its proper effects. This truth, doubtless, may be perverted to an unholy use—it was so in the apostle's days—and it is so still. In every age of the church, there have been men who would not receive this truth as it is delivered in the New Testament, but have run away with detached parts of it to the perversion of others, and thus made it to have a very different effect from what it has, when properly received and taken as a whole. Thus we see, that the Antinomians cannot bear to hear their moral duties preached, vainly supposing, that through the promise they have of persevering, they shall obtain the end, however regardless they may be of the prescribed means. There cannot, however, be a greater mistake than this, nor one more fatal to the real interests of a Christian. For when a person first believes the Gospel, he *then* but commences his warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. To maintain his ground against these spiritual enemies, he must put on the whole armour of God; he must be sober and vigilant, knowing, that his great adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The Christian life is compared to a race, in which case there is no man that sitteth down securely, until he has reached the mark at the end of the course. This metaphor, by

which the Christian life is represented, implies, in its very nature, activity, energy, exertion—a pressing forward with all possible animation and zeal. But how opposite to this doctrine, is that system which teaches men to rest in certain imaginary attainments, of which they fancy themselves possessed, and think they have little more to do, supposing that their being chosen from everlasting, has laid God under an obligation to keep them, consequently that they must infallibly attain eternal life—and this as sure as God is true! But such a sentiment is entirely opposite to the word of God; for while the latter teaches the doctrines of personal election, and the perseverance of the saints, it also, no less clearly, teaches us that all the chosen people of God are imperiously enjoined to be active and vigilant—to give diligence, to make their calling and election sure: to fear lest a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should come short of the blessing; and that this very vigilance and fear which they are so much averse to, is a principally appointed means of keeping them alive to their duty in the Christian profession. Now, all who have learned “the truth as it is in Jesus,” are, by means of the word of the truth of the gospel, growing up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; and as new-born babes are desiring the unadulterated milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. But I proceed to notice—

4. Another characteristic of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” which is, that *it is the only truth that can communicate solid peace and happiness to the human mind.*

It is the only doctrine ever published in the world which can satisfactorily inform a poor guilty sinner how he may obtain peace with God, and an interest in his favour. Here, in this truth, and no where else, can he learn how God is well-pleased and pacified toward sinners of the human race; and how it is consistent with his justice to extend mercy towards them. It is the glory of this truth, that it lays a solid foundation for the believer's everlasting consolation, and good hope through 'grace. And though

he may not at all times be ready to say, that he is sure of heaven, yet he is always sure that the Gospel is true; that the word of God abideth for ever, and that he shall not be disappointed in believing it, and in obeying the truth from the heart. It is peculiar to this truth, therefore, that it communicates solid peace and true happiness to all who receive it in the love of it. And the happiness which it gives, is not founded upon the imagination of men's own minds—not upon some vision, dream, or revelation—not upon any particuilar emotion of the mind, or any single text remaining on it, which created some new idea or favorite fancy; for this, generally, leaves the soul more perplexed than it was before: but it is founded upon the sure testimony and promise of God in his own word. He that understands and believes this truth, can say with the poet,—

“Let the false raptures of the mind  
Be lost and vanish in the wind;  
Here I can fix my hope secure,—  
This is thy word and must endure.”

5. Moreover, it may be remarked in favour of this truth, that it is the only doctrine which presents us with any *certain information in relation to the life to come*. It is by the Gospel, that life and immortality are brought to light; and this is both exemplified and proved in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who hath risen as the first fruits of them that sleep in him. Thus God begets all those that believe it unto a lively hope of an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, and that, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Holding fast the faith of the Gospel, as that faith worketh by love, believers have their joy more and more encreased by the communication of the Spirit, the Comforter, according to the Saviour's own words: “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him”—John xiv. 21.



The Christian has fellowship and communion with God in his ordinances; the Spirit, the Comforter, bearing up his hope of a blessed immortality beyond death and the grave. This truth enables him to look forward with a holy confidence and joy to that time when Christ shall appear, and when he shall see him in his glory, and be conformed to his image. This gives such happiness to the minds of those who are under the influence of this truth, as creates a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." No other doctrine is suited to support such solid peace, happiness, and joy, as the Gospel which rests upon the word of the living God who cannot lie; and "this is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life, and this life is in his Son."\* Now, to inspire and maintain this comfort and joy, it is obvious, at first sight, that the salvation held forth in it must be free, or "without money and without price;" for were this not the case, the thought would be continually occurring to the mind of the sinner—Have I performed the conditions by which I am to be saved? But such is the nature of the Gospel, and the salvation held forth in it, that it is impossible to believe it, without having hope from it, and without having our minds relieved from the most pungent distress arising from conscious guilt, and the threatenings of the divine law. It supposes, not only that this salvation is all of grace, and consequently free; it implies, that it is all-sufficient to reach our case, and to relieve us in the most desperate circumstances wherein we can be placed. This doctrine fills the mind with satisfaction and joy: it turns the soul to it as the foundation of its hope, and the centre of its comfort, and, therefore, this is another property of the Gospel which no other doctrine has. The solid peace which it conveys to the sinner, is that peace which passeth all understanding, and is fixed upon the most solid and unshaken ground; whereas, all the peace which men enjoy upon any other scheme is precarious and delusive. I shall only now add,

\* 1 John ii. 25; and v. 11.

III. That the text suggests to us *the necessity of divine teaching, in order to know and fall under the influence of "the truth as it is in Jesus."* The apostle's words are: "Ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have *heard* him, and *have been taught by him*, as the truth is in Jesus."

Now, the *hearing* and *teaching* to which the apostle refers, must, I conceive, mean something more than merely the outward declaration of the Gospel, or any mere speculations which men may have about it. It must, surely, imply supernatural divine illumination, or the influences of the Holy Spirit attending the ministry of the word. We know, that, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."\* He does not see his need of those things; he perceives not their beauty or excellence, nor does he behold the character of God shining forth in them. For the natural man has a thousand objections to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel; and, hence, there arises a necessity, from the natural blindness of the human mind, for divine teaching, so as to bring down high things, or imaginations which exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ. The apostle represents the removing of their prejudices against the Gospel, as bringing down strong-holds, and levelling, or subduing fortifications. "The weapons of our warfare," says he, "are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, and every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ," an expression, which forcibly implies the inveterate resistance which the human mind makes to the Gospel. "Ye have not so learned Christ, if so be ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."— It is not to be supposed that these Ephesians to whom the apostle wrote his epistle, had ever been privileged with hearing Christ personally, and, therefore, I understand this expression to correspond with what the Saviour him-

\* 1 Cor. ii 14.

self says, as recorded by the Evangelist John: "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me."\* Now, this includes in it an attention to the doctrine and commandments of Christ, as contained in the New Testament Scriptures, in which his will is fully revealed. Those who have heard the voice of Christ, in this sense—who recognize the Gospel as the message of his grace, and know it to be the voice of the glorious Redeemer, who is mighty and able to save—if they have been taught by Him, "as the truth is in Jesus," then it must, undoubtedly, produce those effects which have now been described, and must bring the soul into subjection to him; it will bring the stout-hearted, and those that are far from righteousness, to submit to the righteousness of God, and dispose them to become debtors, everlasting debtors, to the free grace of God for their salvation. It will loosen the heart from this present evil world, and lead it to count all things but loss and dung, when compared with the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Further, this divine teaching is frequently promised in the word of God. "It is written," says our Lord, "and all thy children shall be taught of God." And what comment does the great prophet of the church make on this quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah? Why, it is this—"Every one that hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."† Now this is the *drawing* of the Father, concerning which Christ says, "No man cometh unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him."‡ The prophet Isaiah, speaking of Zion or the true church, says, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Hence, we see that happiness stands connected with this divine teaching, and this, indeed, is manifest from the nature of the truth itself. It requires a mind enlightened from above to perceive its suitableness and its glory, so that the soul shall rest in it as all its salvation and all its desire; and when realized through divine illumination, it

\* John x. 27.

† John vi. 45; with Is. liv. 13.

‡ John vi. 65.

comes to be the delight and happiness of the renewed mind.

Thus, then, we see the necessity of divine teaching, arising from the account that is given us of the depravity of the human heart; and, indeed, from the nature of the truth itself, which is so sublime, and supernatural, and godly, that the carnal mind perceiveth it not.

IN CONCLUSION,—Let us, from this great characteristic of “the truth as it is in Jesus,” examine ourselves whether we have heard and learned this truth. Have we perceived the glory of the divine character and perfections shining in this scheme of salvation, so as to be fully satisfied that it is the truth of God? If so, let us examine what effect it has had upon us:—have we been humbled by it—have we been brought off from all confidence in the flesh, or, indeed, from all those self-righteous labours which are, as it were, in opposition to the righteousness of God—and have we been led to what this glorious truth reveals as the alone foundation of our hope, and ground of our acceptance with God? What has our knowledge of it done for us in the way of sanctification? Do we fall under its influence, so as to have the love of God promoted in us—and doth our faith work by love—influencing us to love God and keep his commandments?

Again, it may be useful to those who profess to know this truth to enquire, what consolation they enjoy in it—what is their enjoyment arising from it? There can be no doubt, that if it stands prominently forward to our view in all its suitableness and glory, it must fill us with peace and joy in believing. We are assured that it had this effect, to a high degree, upon the primitive disciples, and its nature is still the same—it has lost none of its properties by time or age. If it does not still make men *holy* and *happy*, it must be because they have not learned “the truth as it is in Jesus;” for this the scripture always connects with it as its never failing concomitant. So the postle John declares: “He that saith I know him, and keep-

eth not his commandments, is a liar ; and the truth is not in him.”\* And our Lord sets this before us, as the way to distinguish between true and false doctrine: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Thus we are instructed to distinguish between true Christianity and all its counterfeits, by their proper and particular effects. Let us, therefore, see that we are living by the belief of this truth, and that we are under its sanctifying influence, holding fast the faithful word as we have been taught. It is only by living by the faith of the Son of God, that we can bring forth fruit ; for, “as the branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine : so neither can we, except we abide in Christ.”

\* John ii 4-6

## SERMON V.

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### THE VISION ON THE HOLY MOUNT.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

2 Pet. i. 16—18.

WE cannot read the apostolic epistles with attention and not perceive, how deeply these ambassadors of Christ felt themselves interested in the salvation of their Christian brethren; and how solicitous they were to promote their steadfastness in the faith and hope of the Gospel. This was a leading object with them, in writing their epistles to the churches, and they have been preserved by him, who is head over all things, for the instruction, and edification, and comfort of his people in every succeeding age.

In the last chapter of this epistle, we find the apostle Peter, expressly stating the reasons which induced him to write both his letters, ch. iii. 1, 2. It was, “to stir up their minds by way of remembrance,” that they might be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour;” which agrees with what he says in the verses immediately preceding my text, 12—15. “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in

remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." And then follow the words which I first read, as the ground of the present discourse. I need not tell you, that these verses are full of the grandest and most interesting truths. And in endeavouring to illustrate them, we shall first consider—*the doctrine* which the apostle made known;—then *the evidence* by which it was confirmed;—and, lastly, the practical *improvement* we are called to make of the whole subject.

I. With regard to the doctrine which the apostles made known, both in their preaching and writing, Peter sums it up in the words of the text, in two particulars. "We made known to you," he says, "the *power* and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ." This was the great theme of their testimony, in all they had to say to their fellow sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, upon the all-important concern of their salvation:—they testified, declared, or made known, "the *power* and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

There have been differences of opinion among the learned respecting the *coming* of Christ, here referred to. Some understand it of his *first* coming—while others restrict it to his *second*. But there is no necessity for excluding either of these views from the import of the apostle's words; because, the fact is, that in preaching the Gospel, the apostles testified both of his first and second coming; the first, having already taken place, at the same time declaring the grand and interesting events which had been accomplished by it—and the *second*, as that which believers are called to look forward unto, as the consummation of their eternal felicity. For instance—

1. These ambassadors of the Prince of Peace, proclaimed

the Messiah's advent as having actually taken place in their own day, conformably to the prophecies which went before concerning him; declaring also that the end and design of it was to save sinners. Their language was—that “in the fulness of time, God had sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,”—Gal. iv. 4, 5. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,”—1 Tim. i. 15. He appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself,”—Heb. ix. 26. And while they bare witness to the coming of Christ in the flesh, with the gracious end and design of his manifestation, they declared the miraculous *power* which attended his *first* coming, in the wonderful works which Jesus wrought, appealing to his very enemies for the truth of them, yea, even to those who put him to death. Attend, my brethren, to their own language: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves also know*,”—Acts ii. 22. Again, ch. x. 38,—40, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and *with power*, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him: And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly.” Thus we see, that

The apostles also pointed to *the resurrection* of Christ in proof of the *power* that attended his first coming. On this subject Peter's language was: “HIM, whom ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because *it was not possible* he should be holden of it,”—Acts ii. 24. Paul also, in ch. xiii. 30—33, says: “God raised him from the dead,” thus fulfilling the promise which was made unto the fathers, as it is written in the second Psalm, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” For as this latter apostle



tells the Romans: "Jesus was declared to be the Son of God *with power*, by his resurrection from the dead,"—Rom. i. 4. Divine power was signally displayed in this astonishing event, and so the apostle describes it as "the energy of the might of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,"—Eph. i. 19, 20.

Once more. The apostles in announcing the first coming of Christ, and the glory that followed it, pointed to his *exaltation* at the right hand of God, vested with the highest power and glory. Thus we find Peter, on the day of Pentecost, addressing his murderers: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses: therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear—For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool—Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST,"—Acts ii. 32—36. And thus we see, in the words now quoted, that the apostles made known the miraculous *power of the Spirit*, which the glorified Redeemer shed forth upon his disciples on the day of Pentecost, and by which he gave success to his word; for, as we read upon another occasion, "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord,"—Acts xi. 21. Thus the apostles made known, the *first* coming of the Saviour, and the power which attended it. But they showed at the same time, that this power was not such as the carnal Jews expected. The power which they expected in their promised Messiah was that which arises from, or is connected with, the glory of this world—such as high birth, a splendid retinue, immense riches, worldly honour, and the power of the sword, to deliver them from the Roman yoke; whereas the power which attended Jesus of Nazareth was of quite a different nature, it was supernatural and heavenly—the power of God controlling and even reversing the course of nature—calling the things

which be not as though they were—the power of an endless life, which appeared in raising Lazarus from the sleep of death, at the voice “Come forth,”—and still more strikingly in raising Jesus himself from the dead! But

The apostles in preaching the Gospel, also made known the *second* coming of Christ, at the last day, which is to be “with power and great glory,” according to his own prediction—Matt. xxiv. 30. “They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” His second advent will not be like the first; it will not be that of the infant at Bethlehem: there will be nothing of the stable and the manger; he will come in glory, and all the holy angels with him—and it will be *with power to raise the dead*, according to his own words,—John v. 28, &c. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” And not only will he come with power to raise the dead, but also with authority to judge the world, the quick and the dead; for “he commanded his apostles to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead,”—Acts x. 42. Accordingly the apostle Paul testified to the people of Athens, that “God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,”—ch. xvii. 31.

We may add, that the apostles, in their preaching, made known the second coming of Christ, to *punish the wicked, and reward his own servants*. Hence, the apostle Paul thus writes to the Thessalonians: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them

that believe.”\* Having thus shown what it was that the apostles of our Lord testified, or made known in their preaching, we now come to consider,

II. The evidence they had to produce for the truth of their testimony. In reference to this, the apostle says: “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.” This may be intended to obviate the unjust calumnies of infidels, concerning whom he speaks particularly, ch. iii. 1—4. “There shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Or the apostle may intend by these words to contrast the conduct of the ambassadors of Christ with that of the false prophets or teachers mentioned in ch. ii. 1, “Who, through covetousness, with feigned words made merchandize of them,” by having recourse to such *holy guile*, as it has been termed. The apostles, however, were upright and sincere in their conduct. For as they were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so they spake, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth the hearts. For neither at any time used they flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness, (for the truth of which they could call God to witness,) nor of men sought they glory, when they might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ, but were gentle among them, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. Paul could appeal to the Thessalonian brethren, and to God also, as to his holy and unblameable conduct while among them: “Ye are witnesses,” says he, “and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe,”—1 Thess. ii. 4—10. But not to dwell on this, let us proceed to consider, the evidence which they had to adduce for the truth of their testimony, as it re-

\* 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

spected the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in reference to this, the apostle tells us,

1. That they were *eye-witnesses* of what they testified. To be the apostles of Christ, it was necessary that they should be eye-witnesses, or, in other words, that they should have "seen the Lord." Hence we find Jesus, just before he left the world, saying, "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning,"—John xv. 27. And when an apostle was to be chosen in the place of Judas Iscariot, we find the eleven saying, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection,"—Acts i. 21, 22. We also find the apostle Paul adducing it as a proof of his apostleship, that "he had seen the Lord,"—1 Cor. ix. 1. And John is still more express in the introduction to his first epistle: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that declare we unto you,"—1 John i. 1—3. You may also recollect how the apostle brings in this subject, when treating of Christ's resurrection,—1 Cor. xv. 5—10. "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then of all the apostles; and last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." From all this we learn, that when the apostles bore witness unto Christ, they did not speak of things of which they had no knowledge, but of facts concerning which they could not be mistaken. Again,

2. The apostle Peter adduces *the vision* on the holy mount, as another branch of evidence to the truth of the Messiahship of Jesus, for then they were eye-witnesses of *his majesty*.

The extraordinary circumstances to which the apostle refers, are mentioned, you know, by three of the evangelists.\* If you turn to the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, you will find it thus recorded: "And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth

\* Matt. xvii; Mark ix; and Luke ix.

them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them, Moses and Elias\* talking with him—and behold a bright cloud overshadowed them—and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said: ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,’”—ver. 1—5. This is the occurrence to which the apostle alludes in my text, as an evidence of the truth of what they testified concerning the character, and mission and work, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us examine it a little particularly.

We all know, that during a great part of the life of Jesus, or rather the time of his tabernacling among us in this world, he appeared in the humble guise of a servant—he was as a root springing up out of dry ground—he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as described by the prophet Isaiah, ch. liii; and by Paul in Phil. ch. ii. But the three apostles, on this special occasion, were permitted to behold him in another and very different condition: they had a glimpse of him in his glorified state, that state to which he was afterwards raised as the reward of his sufferings and death, and the vision was overpowering to their senses. On this remarkable transaction, you must allow me to indulge in a little prolixity. The scene of it is said, by tradition, to have been Mount Tabor. The transfiguration itself, was not a change of the substance of our Lord, but a glory put on it for a time; for he remained afterwards in the flesh, and had still to die. It was an intense beaming forth of the hidden glory of the Only-begotten Son of God, through the tabernacle in which he had enshrined it while he dwelt among us, so that it penetrated the pores of his very garments, and “they became white and glistening.”

This transfiguration was remarkable, also, for the appearance of Moses and Elias,\* both of whom “appeared in glory;” that is, in a splendour similar to his own:—MOSES, whose body was then in the grave, and ELIAS,\* who had never undergone the separation of soul and body; and this

\* Elijah, spelt in Greek, “Elias.”

presented the apostles with a view of Jesus, as "Lord of the living and the dead." They had at the same time a view of the condition of the saints, raised from the dead, having their bodies glorified, exemplified in ELIAS,\* and of the condition of departed souls, "present with the Lord, while absent from the body," exemplified in MOSES, who appeared in glory as well as ELIAS.\* When they saw the lawgiver, who had so often conversed with Him of old in a figure, and whose law was in an especial manner pointed against every likeness of God, that men could imagine—when they saw the greatest succeeding prophet, who was distinguished by his being very jealous for the honour of the one God, who shares not his glory with another—when, I say, they beheld these two eminent men attending upon Jesus in his glory, and illuminated thereby, they had an undeniable proof that he was truly God—that He was the great scope and end of the law given by the former, and of all the zeal shown by the latter.

But equally remarkable was their discourse. "They spake," says the evangelist Luke, "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The same evangelist tells us, that the disciples were overpowered with sleep,—not natural, but supernatural. They saw not the beginning of the vision, nor did they hear all the discourse; but they awoke, to see the glory and to recognize their great lawgiver and prophet. It is added, that "they were sore afraid," and yet felt that "it was good for them to be there." Such is the strange effect of opposite feelings caused by heavenly visions upon those who still dwell in houses of clay. Under the influence of this overwhelming impression, Peter said: "If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles—one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias;"\* but "he wist not what he said."

The final scene rises in majesty and impressiveness. "A bright cloud overshadowed them:"—this was the Shekinah, the well known symbol of the divine presence and glory, "and they feared as they entered into the cloud." And there came forth "a voice out of the cloud," which said, "THIS

\* Elijah.

IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED, HEARE YE HIM." The divine voice, thus directed to Jesus, and to him peculiarly, distinguishing him from all others, was an explicit and full decision of the whole controversy that had existed between him and the Jews during his public ministry; it was, in fact, the broad seal of heaven, stamping the person, character, work, and words of Jesus as all truly divine, ratifying every word he spake as infallible truth, and sustaining all his work as perfect. It was, in fact, as much as to say to the holy apostles, "This is the true God, and eternal life: little children, keep yourselves from idols." And now, with respect to the testimony given to Jesus,

3. It was by *an audible voice, from the excellent glory*—it issued out of a bright cloud which overshadowed them,—Matt. xvii. 5. This cloud, as has been already observed, was the well known symbol of the divine presence, the Shechinah, and so it assured the three apostles, that it was the immediate testimony of God the Father, consequently of the very highest authority in reference to the character, mission, and work, of his beloved Son: for "he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory." It was, I repeat, the broad seal of heaven to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, stamping divinity upon all his words and actions; and so divinely calculated to remove every doubt from their minds, which might be occasioned by his external poverty and meanness. And now let us attend,

4. To the testimony borne to him, by this voice from the excellent glory:—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Such is the divine attestation to the character and work of the Saviour—the testimony which God hath given of his Son; indicating his good pleasure in his undertaking, considered as the substitute and representative of his guilty people—his approbation of the offi-

ces of Prophet, Priest, and King, which he condescended to sustain in the economy of redemption, and as the one Mediator between God and man. Now this voice from the excellent glory imports,—

1. That HE, whom the Jews took, and by wicked hands crucified and slew, was “truly the Son of the Highest,”—a divine person—the Word made flesh—or God manifest in human nature—the image of the invisible God—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person—the first begotten from the dead, and as such, the appointed heir of all things, possessing the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power,—He, into whose hands all authority and power are committed, both in heaven and on earth. It implies his exaltation to the Father’s right hand, where he is set down upon his throne, angels, principalities, and powers being put into subjection unto him, and vested with authority to judge the quick and the dead.\* Moreover,

2. This divine attestation to the person and work of Immanuel—this declaration from the excellent glory imports, that God is WELL PLEASED in what Jesus hath done as the Saviour of the guilty, the substitute and representative of sinners; so that he is now reconciled to them through his death, or in virtue of his atonement and intercession.

As the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins, so he perfectly accomplished the arduous undertaking: “God sent forth his Son, in the fulness of time, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice unto God for a sweet smelling savour. He bore the punishment due unto their sins in his own body on the tree—dying the just one in the room of the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.” Thus he purged our sins, or made an ex-

\* John i. 1, 2, 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. i. 3; Acts xiii. 33; John v. 22.



piation for them, *by the sacrifice of himself*. In this sacrifice, Jehovah rests eternally well-pleased—justice is completely satisfied—sin is atoned for—the curse removed—and everlasting righteousness brought in, for the justification of all who believe, and who, as the effect thereof, take refuge under the covert of the Redeemer's blood. His covenant engagements, indeed, brought him unto the dust of death; but when he expired upon Mount Calvary, the victim of divine justice, his dying cry was the triumph of victory—"IT IS FINISHED;" having said which, he bowed his head, and yielded up his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. In this astonishing work of atonement and sacrifice, all the perfections of Deity are glorified in the highest possible degree, while a way is thereby opened for mercy, love, and grace, to flow to the guilty and the miserable who believe in Jesus, in perfect harmony with the claims of justice and the honours of the divine government. 'Tis at the foot of the cross that mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. The divine good-pleasure rests with complacency in the finished work of his beloved Son, whom he raised from the dead in testimony of his entire approbation and perfect satisfaction with what he had done.

3. And now consider, I beseech you, what were the circumstances of Jesus, when, as the apostle Peter in my text expresses it, he received from God the Father, honour and glory. Was it when honours were heaped upon him by mortals? Was the voice from the excellent glory, an echo of the plaudits of an admiring world? No, truly, when on that memorable occasion, the light of heaven shone around him, investing his sacred person, and the glory of heaven overspread the hallowed scene; when the inhabitants of heaven descended to do him homage, and the God of heaven announced him as the centre of his delights, and the medium of his communication with the children of men; he was the object of general contempt

and scorn—"despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It was *then*, amidst the insults and reproaches, the cruel mockings and blasphemies, and contradiction of sinners, that Jehovah beheld him with unabated, and even, if it were possible, with increased delight. When infatuated mortals, blinded by the god of this world, were hiding their faces from him, HE lifted upon him the light of his countenance, and favoured him with far more than ordinary tokens of his complacential regard. When the eyes of carnal men saw no beauty in him, why they should desire him, the eye of his heavenly Father beamed upon him with ineffable delight. When the lips of sinners were filled with reproaches, which broke his heart, the voice of the Eternal attested his excellence and spake his praise. And this approbation and delight attended him to the last. The injuries which he suffered from an ungodly world, only the more endeared the holy, harmless sufferer, to the Divine Father that sent him on the errand of salvation. In the garden of Gethsemane, at the judgment of Caiaphas, at the tribunal of Pilate, when he was reviled, and buffeted, and spit upon, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, scourged, crowned with thorns, and laden with his cross—at that awful crisis, the sentiments of heaven and earth were in complete contrast. And, let me add, that contrast was perfected on Mount Calvary. Then the hatred, and malice, and scorn of men exhausted themselves in insult and cruelty; yet even there, the delight of Jehovah in the Son of his love was at its highest pitch. Never was divine complacency in him more perfect—never were admiration and love more intensely in exercise, than when he uttered the mysterious anguish of his soul in those memorable words: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" and when, bowing his sacred head, he exclaimed, "IT IS FINISHED," and instantly resigned his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father. That was, indeed,

the hour and the power of darkness. The malignity of earth and hell was *then* permitted to do its utmost, but at that moment the sympathies of heaven were all awakened; and though the face of Jehovah was *judicially* hidden from him, the heart of his heavenly Father was still towards him in the plenitude of everlasting love. And this brings me to consider,

III. The use or improvement which we should make of this subject. And the first inference that I shall deduce from it is this—that it is well calculated *to confirm the faith of the disciples of Jesus*, in the Gospel which they have professed to believe.

This is the use which the apostle Peter himself makes of the subject, as you will find by looking to the 19th verse, which thus reads: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy;”—or, as I think the words of the apostle ought to be translated, “*We have the prophetic word more confirmed to us*,” namely, by the transactions on the holy mount. For, we must not overlook this important consideration, that in the transactions which took place on the holy mount, as referred to in the text, all the prophetic writings met their accomplishment, and obtained a grand illustration, when examined in that point of view, and in connexion with that event. We cannot go at large into this sublime subject at present; but to furnish a few hints, I may remark, that “the Testimony concerning Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,”—“To him gave all the prophets witness.”—“They testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Now if you only keep this in view, and then look to the transactions on the holy mount, you will see what a flood of light they cast upon all the writings of the prophets. The suffering character of Jesus was sufficiently apparent to his apostles, and it corresponded with the prophetic testimony, though it must be owned that the prejudices under which they all laboured, at this

time, in favor of a temporal kingdom for the Messiah, made them slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written—but *here*, upon the holy mount, the three apostles had an anticipation of him in his *glorified state*—that state to which he was exalted, as the reward of his sufferings, when by the Father's right hand he was not only raised from the dead, but also crowned with glory and honour in the highest heavens, where he is constituted both Lord and Christ. This vision on the holy mount, then, which was no doubt intended to strengthen the Redeemer, and arm him with fortitude in the view of the dreadful load of sufferings which he was about to undergo, must also have had a powerful tendency to confirm the faith and confidence of the apostles in his divine mission and character, and it should be improved by all his followers, as a motive to steadfastness in the faith and hope of the Gospel.

2. Let this subject be improved by us, as a preservative against the seductions of false teachers. Among these, we may surely enumerate all those who detract from the glory of the Redeemer's character, as God manifest in the flesh—all who impugn the ends of his mission into our world, which was to save sinners—all who detract from the perfection of his sacrifice, by calling the sinner to a round of religious duties, in order to make his peace with God, or to work his way to the divine righteousness; an interest in which, you know, is obtained, not *working* but *believing*—for it is unto, and upon all that believe without difference. Remember that the divine good-pleasure rests upon the person and work of God's beloved Son; this is the centre of the joy of charity, and we can have fellowship with God in no other way, than by delighting in that wherein he declares himself "well-pleased." The apostle Peter warned his brethren of these false teachers, ch. ii. 1.; and they have abounded in every succeeding age of the church—they are nu-

merous in our day, and we need to beware of them. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction which causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge."

3. Let the subject that we have been considering, *influence the hope* of the people of God.

"We," says the apostle, ch. iii. 13, "according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Surely, such a blessed object of hope and expectation should raise us above this dark scene of things, and lead us by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, even eternal life. "Having such hope, we should purify ourselves, even as the Lord is pure; for, though we are now the sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Let us gird up the loins of our minds, be sober, and hope perfectly for the grace which shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

4. Let this subject be improved by us as an incitement to *diligence*, and the exercise of *patience*.

These are duties to which the apostle had been exhorting his Christian brethren a little before the text, ver. 5—10. They were to give diligence—to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. In this way, alone, can we make our calling and election sure, and secure an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must not forget that it is the appointment of heaven, that through faith and patience we are to inherit the promises. Let us, therefore, not be slothful, but followers of those who patiently endured, fighting the good fight of faith; and thus shall we lay hold on eternal life.

## SERMON VI.

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### THE INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Mat. xi. 28.

It has often been remarked by moral writers, that the possession of happiness is the motive and end of all our actions and passions, our pleasures and our pains. It is the central point to which all animated nature is hurried by a rapid and irresistible movement. Men are united in society, solely for the purpose of procuring it. All states and professions are so many channels in which it is sought. The great and the mean, the rich and the poor, infancy and age, passions and talents, pleasures and toils, are all engaged in the unremitting pursuit of it. From the people that inhabit the most polished cities, to the savage that prowls in the desert; from the throne of the monarch to the hut of the most abject peasant, the world is travailing in birth to bring forth peace, tranquillity, or *rest to the soul*.

It is manifest, however, that the ways in which this good is sought, are not only various, but very opposite. In scarcely any thing are mankind fully agreed respecting it, except in the desire of attaining it, and in this there is no diversity of sentiment. The thirst after happiness is as natural to us, as it is to breathe the vital air—it is engraven in our very nature—a law stamped upon the heart of man by Him who made him

what he is, and, consequently, to act otherwise—to prefer misery for its own sake, would be to contravene the law of nature, and exhibit a conduct at once unnatural and monstrous.

But how shall we account for that restlessness of mind which is every where apparent, and for that endless variety of sentiments which prevail among mankind respecting the inquiry, “In what does true happiness consist, and how is it to be attained?” How shall we account for it, that the blessing seems so generally to elude the grasp of the person that is in pursuit of it? The scripture affords the only satisfactory solution of this difficulty that is any where to be obtained. There we learn, that man was, originally, formed for enjoying happiness in God, in the conscious sense of the divine favour; this was his proper life, and the human soul can be satisfied with nothing short of it. But sin has thrown the soul off its centre; and instead of seeking its happiness in God, it is instinctively prompted to go in quest of it, where it can never be found, for no earthly good can supply its place. Were we to fix a human being in the most favoured circumstances imaginable—load him with riches and honours in profusion—and add to these the opportunity of indulging in all the gratifications of sense; yet as none of these can convey into his mind a sense of the favour of his Maker, which he lost by transgression, they must necessarily leave him restless and dissatisfied, the prey of a disquieted conscience; and while that is his state and condition, he inevitably remains at a great distance from happiness.

To find a remedy for this evil has been the great business of philosophy in all ages of the world. But the schools have exhausted their stores of learning and information, and the inquiry still continues, “Who will show us any good?” The Jewish scribe, and the Greek philosopher, were busily engaged in discussing the question in days of yore; but, unhappily, being

ignorant of the disease, it was beyond their ability to prescribe an efficacious remedy.

The words of the text present us with a view of the great teacher, who came from God—the prophet of the Christian church, calling off the attention of men from all the wisdom of the schools, and the suggestions of their own fond imaginations, to listen to his instructions on this fundamental point. In considering what he says, we shall take into consideration—the character of him that speaks;—the persons whom he addresses, *the weary and heavy laden*;—the import of the invitation: “Come unto me;”—and illustrate the promise: “I will give you rest.”

I. Who then is the speaker, but the SON OF GOD himself—a divine person—the same who at first called the universe into existence, and who is “God over all, and blessed for ever.” It is this sublime and glorious Being, not absolutely as Jehovah, Lord of the armies of heaven; but as Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh, and so partaking of the same nature with the children whom his Father gave him to redeem. HE it is who gives the invitation in my text, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is He who was the promised and long expected Messiah—the hope and glory of Israel—the desire of all nations—the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of his church—the appointed and commissioned Saviour of the guilty and the miserable;—who was sanctified and sent into the world to reveal his Father’s name—make a complete atonement for sin—and who has power to bestow eternal life on all who believe in him. It is he who has all things delivered unto him of his heavenly Father, ver. 27; and that for the benefit of the wretched and miserable; for it hath pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell, and to whom all power is committed both in heaven and earth,



—who possesses a fulness of dignity and worth—of riches and honour—of wisdom and knowledge—of grace and love—of happiness and glory:—in a word, it is He in whom is treasured up the unsearchable riches and fulness of the Godhead—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. This is the glorious, the sublime, the exalted Being, the beloved Son of God, who calls upon the children of want and déstitution—those who “labour and are heavy laden,” to come to him for rest and peace. It is HE that speaketh in righteousness, mighty to save. And, observe, I beseech you, the conscious greatness which these few simple words indicate. We are accustomed to admire their graciousness only, and kindness, but there is a wonderful loftiness in them—a breaking forth of the Saviour's Majesty and Godhead.

Have you ever tried, brethren, to administer comfort to a troubled heart? If so, you must have found, that the work is frequently beyond your power. It is always beyond it, unless it please God to make use of you as an instrument to perform it. No mere creature can give rest to a restless soul. All creatures together could not do so. It is the great prerogative of Him who made the human soul to impart rest to it; no other can. “I create the fruit of the lips,” says Jehovah. “Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is nigh, saith the Lord.”—“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” But in the text we have our Lord claiming this high prerogative of Jehovah for himself. He takes up Jehovah's own lofty language, and says: “I will give you rest.” He does not say, as the prophets of old did, “Turn to the Lord, and the Lord will comfort you.” He says, “Come unto me, and I will relieve you of your trouble.” And the reason is, He who spake these words, was himself the Lord of hosts; this gracious Saviour was himself the everlasting Jehovah. The Being who here tells us that he has rest for us, is the source of

all happiness; the spring from which flows, as from a fountain, all the bliss of heaven. All heaven rejoices in him, and lives upon him, and looks up to him as its light and glory. And He is the Being too, who has all hearts at his command, and can do with them whatsoever he will. He can fill them to the full with sorrow and bitterness, or make them overflow, if it so please him, with comfort and joy. Hence, it follows, that we are not invited in this scripture to come for rest to one who has no rest to give us, or not enough for all who apply. There is more power in him to comfort, than there is in the world, or anything else, to disquiet. There is more comfort in Him for sinners, than there is water in the ocean, or light in the sun. His invitation is given with all the fearlessness of conscious abundance, because he well knows, that he has enough and to spare for a perishing world. Let us now consider,

II. Who are the persons particularly addressed in this gracious invitation. Their characters, we see, are pointed out by very significant and expressive terms, viz. those who *labour*, and are *heavy laden*. This, however, will require a little explanation, in order to clear the subject of certain mists and corrupt glosses, which are sometimes put upon the words. Many teachers, in our day, tell us, that the persons spoken of in the text, and to whom the invitation is given, denote such as are labouring under strong convictions of sin, and are heavy laden with an overwhelming sense of their actual vileness, as transgressors of God's holy and righteous law; such as are deeply penetrated with a view of the demerit of their iniquities, and so are labouring to obtain peace to their guilty consciences. This is considered to be a necessary preparatory work of the law to fit men for the reception of the Gospel; and so the individuals referred to are regarded in the light of *qualified persons*, and are thought to have a preferable claim to

the blessings of the Gospel above every other class of sinners. This, however, I take to be a wrong view of the subject, and its tendency is to becloud the doctrine of divine grace, by prescribing conditions and qualifications, either to be performed or experienced by sinful mortals before they can have anything to do with the Gospel of the grace of God. In sending the glad tidings of peace, pardon, and salvation among perishing sinners, the Most High overlooks all the petty distinctions which are to be found between one sinner and another; and viewing the whole race of Adam, as by nature, in one common state of guilt and condemnation, sets before them one way of salvation, one ground of hope, one way of escape from the wrath to come, one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin—the sacrifice of his beloved Son; one perfect righteousness, wrought out by his obedience unto death, and which righteousness is unto and upon all that believe without difference. The gracious Saviour invites the most guilty, the most hardened and obdurate and insensible sinners, to take shelter under the covert of his atoning blood. His language to such is: “Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry.”—“Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live.” Which is in perfect agreement with the invitation in my text: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

To take up this subject in a scriptural light, it must be carefully kept in view, that all men, while in a natural state, may be considered as “labouring and heavy laden.” By their departure from God, the whole race of Adam have brought themselves into a state of sin and misery. Man was, originally, formed holy and happy: but then his happiness lay in the enjoyment of the divine favour—which was his proper life. God was the portion of his soul, in him he had rest and full satisfaction, adequate to his highest conceptions

and most enlarged desires. But when he rebelled against God, a consciousness of guilt seized his mind, he lost the favour of his Maker, and by necessary consequence his true happiness, and he then became a stranger to rest and peace. As a punishment of his transgressions, he was made subject to the toils, the troubles, and calamities of this mortal life, with the certain prospect of returning again to the dust, and mingling with his parent earth. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." His insatiable and boundless thirst after happiness, nevertheless, continues; it is a leading and constituent law of his nature, of which he can never divest himself: but alienated as he is from God, the alone source of true happiness, man seeks it with restless anxiety among the creatures, where it never can be found. Day after day, he chases the phantom with all the ardour of pursuit, but it continually eludes his grasp and mocks his expectation—and for a very obvious reason, because none of the objects in which he seeks it are at all adequate to the desires of a soul formed to enjoy God as its portion. And hence proceeds all the restless labour and toil with which mankind are occupied from day to day.

To illustrate this subject a little further, we shall take a cursory glance at some of the leading ways in which those who are ignorant of the Gospel, are labouring to obtain rest to their souls, or procure happiness, which is the same thing.

There are multitudes of our fellow creatures, who seek their happiness *in the pleasures of sense*, or the gratification of their sensual appetites, indulging the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, living in softness, delicacy, and effeminacy. Their language is, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Solomon tells us, that, at one period of his life, he tried this experiment, but he found it to fail him. "Whatever mine eyes desired," says he, "I kept not from them; I with-

held not mine heart from any joy." But he found "the eye was not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," and he pronounced all to be "vanity and vexation of spirit, and that there was no profit," (that is, real happiness to be found in the creatures,) "under the sun." \* Such was the nature of Solomon's experience, and so great his disappointment in the pursuit of happiness in a course of sensual pleasure. When his labour was ended, there was nothing left him but to sigh over its results.

Again, there are others who seek happiness in the accumulation of *riches*, and the pursuit of *honour* and *distinction* among their fellow creatures. But what is there in these things, if attained, that can give ease to the soul, or satisfy the cravings of an immortal mind? There is something in the bare pursuit of these things that is sordid, groveling, and calculated to debase the mind. Solomon tried this plan also, but with no better success. He multiplied the number of his servants, male and female—he had immense possessions of cattle, great and small, surpassing all that were in Jerusalem before him—and he gathered heaps of gold and silver, and the peculiar treasure of kings and the provinces—he procured men and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments of all sorts; so that his magnificence surpassed all that was before him in Jerusalem. It is very manifest from what he tells us, that he conducted the experiment upon a large scale, sparing neither pains nor expense to gratify the pride of life, and make the most of this world; but he found himself as far off from real happiness as ever.

Further, there are a select few who, disdain the sordid gratifications of sense, as beneath the dignity of a rational being destined for immortality, would soar above these groveling pursuits, and seek after happiness *in the acquisition of knowledge*, or the *cultivation of their intellectual powers*. Devoting themselves to reading and study, they are immersed in literary and scien-

tific pursuits. And it certainly must be admitted, that this is a more rational way of seeking happiness, than in the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense, or the accumulation of riches, and the honour which cometh from man. It was in this way that the Greek philosophers in ancient times, the disciples of Socrates, and Aristotle, and Plato and others sought it, as many in our day still do. But have philosophers themselves ever attained to true happiness by their researches? Rather, has not philosophy set them at a greater distance from it? It seems that the renowned king of Israel did not neglect this source, for he tells us: "I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have got more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge; and I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit: for in much wisdom there is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

These, then, are some of the ways in which the men of the world are in quest of happiness, but in which they seek it in vain. Those who have had the best opportunities of making the experiment, have returned from the chase wearied and disappointed, and have been the foremost to confess their vexation of spirit. But man is not only labouring in search of happiness from the things of this world, though continually disappointed of attaining the blessing; he is also burthened and distressed with a sense of guilt, and harassed with fearful forebodings of the divine displeasure against sin.—It is impossible for him to divest himself of the work of the divine law in his conscience, whereby he in some measure knows his duty, his sin, and his consequent danger. He cannot, therefore, but be greatly distressed for the want of a righteousness in which to appear before the Judge of all the earth with acceptance. This is, in truth, the canker-worm that lies at the root

of all man's earthly enjoyments, corroding, undermining, and detracting from all his earthly bliss. If he turn his thoughts God-wards, he thinks of a Being in whom he lives, and moves, and upon whom he is momentarily dependent—the source of all his enjoyments, in whose hand is his breath, and to whom he is accountable for all his thoughts, words, and actions, and who, he knows, will one day bring him into judgment—a Being whom he is under the highest obligations to love supremely, but whom he is conscious he has made his enemy by transgression. This consciousness of guilt makes the thoughts of a holy God painful to him, and leads him to banish from his recollection, as much as in him lies, a subject which can only be reflected on with pain and anguish of mind, and thus living without God in the world, “he labours and is heavy laden:” a guilty conscience embitters all his present enjoyments, and often renders life a burden to its possessor. Now, the gracious Saviour calls upon all these different classes of men, who are vainly labouring in the pursuit of happiness, where it never was, nor ever can be found, to forsake lying vanities, and *Come unto Him*, no longer to spend their money for that which is not bread, nor their labour for that which satisfieth not; but to incline their ear and come unto him, to hear, that their souls may live. And this brings us to consider,—

III. The import of the call and invitation in my text,—“COME UNTO ME.” In this gracious invitation, the Son of God directs men to himself for rest, and peace, and happiness, in opposition to all the various ways in which they are seeking it. We have already noticed some of the leading pursuits in which erring mortals are engaged—pleasure, riches, honour, or the pride of life, literary pursuits, or the acquisition of knowledge; these are the objects which solicit the attention, stimulate the desires, and engross the hearts

and affections of the children of men. But Christ calls them off from all these delusive schemes, as being utterly ineffectual to the attainment of the end they have in view, and presents himself to them in place of them all—yea, he invites, entreats, and beseeches them to come unto *him*, in whom alone that blessing they are in pursuit of is to be found. In vain does a guilty sinner dream of happiness, until he knows something of the way of salvation,—and Christ alone is that way;—for there is life and peace in none other, neither is there salvation in in any other, for there is no name under heaven given among men, by which lost rebels can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. He is the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him. What is the testimony of the oracles of eternal truth, concerning the state of all unbelievers? Why that, by nature, they are the children of wrath under the condemning sentence of the divine law, the wrath of God abiding on their guilty heads—they are living without hope, and without God in the world. Now, it is to all such characters, without exception, that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in the words of my text—“Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

But here an important inquiry arises—what are we to understand by *coming* to Christ? It cannot mean any local advance of the body. In the days of his public ministry, thousands approached him in this way, and followed him from place to place, attracted by his miracles, or for the sake of the loaves and the fishes, who reaped no saving benefit from him—and why? Because they did not believe him to be the true Messiah—the promised seed—the Son of God—the alone Saviour of a lost world. For had they received him *as such*, they would have become his disciples in reality—embraced him as the Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church: they would have given themselves up to his teaching, looked for redemption only through his death, and submitted to his kingly rule and government in all the



affairs of religion. But that they were not prepared to do; they stumbled at that stumbling-stone! Flushed with the carnal notion of worldly pomp and greatness in their Messiah, their blinded minds could not penetrate the humble guise in which the Prince of Life appeared in this world, and they rejected his claims, made light of his doctrine and miracles, and perished in their sins. I repeat, therefore, that *coming* to Christ, does not import any local advance towards him with our bodily presence. He is now in heaven, enthroned in bliss, and there he shall remain until the time of the restitution of all things, when he will come again the second time, without a sin offering, to perfect the salvation of his people.

But if coming to Christ do not import any local advance, or our approaching to him with our bodies, you will be ready to ask, does it not mean some arduous exercise of the mind and body, by means of which sinners are to work their way into the favour and love of God, and so prepare themselves for receiving the grace of Christ? So, indeed, many renowned teachers would persuade us, and in this way they contrive to place a formidable barrier between Christ and the sinner, prescribing to the latter as arduous an undertaking as if he were called to keep the whole law! Happy for us that the Scriptures do not countenance this notion! We have only to attend to them in their native simplicity, to learn that to *come* to Christ, is the same thing as to *believe* on him, or give full credit to what the Gospel testifies concerning him; for it is such coming, as issues in spiritual rest to the soul,—see ver. 29; but it is in “believing that we enter into rest,” as the apostle Paul tells the Hebrews,—ch. iv. 3. Consult the writings of the evangelists and apostles, and you will find that *coming* and *believing* are frequently used as words of similar import. This is the case in the following texts: “Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and

he that *believeth* on me shall never thirst.”—“But I said unto you that ye also have *seen* me and *believed* not: all that the Father hath given me shall *come* unto me.”—“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which *seeth* the Son and *believeth* on on him, may have everlasting life.”—“No man can *come* to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day: every one, therefore, which hath heard and learned of the Father *cometh* unto me.—Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life: but there are some of you which *believe* not; therefore, said I unto you, that no man can *come* to me, except it were given him of my Father,”—John vi. 35—65. Again, —ch. vii.; “Jesus stood and cried, if any man thirst, let him *come* to me and drink: He that *believeth* on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,”—ver. 37, 38. The apostle Peter also evidently uses the words *coming* and *believing* as synonymous, when he thus writes to those who had tasted that the Lord is gracious: “To whom *coming*, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that *believeth* on him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which *believe*, he is precious,”—1 Peter ii. 3—7.

Now, to sum up what hath been said on this head: Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and Saviour of sinners, is held forth in the Gospel testimony in all the glory of his person, character, and salvation, as God manifest in the flesh—“the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world—the way, the truth, and the life;”—the great Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church, who, by his death upon the cross, made reconciliation for

the sins of men, and brought in everlasting righteousness for the justification of all who believe in him; and sinners of all sorts and of every description, high and low, rich and poor—the learned and the ignorant—the decent moralist, and the abandoned profligate—the proud and self-righteous pharisee, who is sporting himself with his own deceivings, and the self-condemned publican and harlot—they are one and all, invited, persuaded, entreated, and besought, to credit the Gospel testimony concerning him, with the promise of a faithful God, that in so doing, they shall find rest to their souls, and never be put to confusion. Think of the dignity of the Speaker in my text. It is he who said of old, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: “There is no God else beside me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else,”—Is. xlv. 21, 22. Those who really believe in him must enjoy the blessings promised in the text we have under consideration; their souls will respond to the invitation: “Come unto me,” in the language of the prophet: “Behold, Lord, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel,”—Jer. iii. 22, 23. Which brings me to consider,

IV. The import of the blessing promised in the text, “I will give you rest.”

1. In obeying the call—in coming unto Christ, or believing on him, his disciples find *rest* from all their fruitless and vain pursuits after happiness in the things of this present world. And this he gives them by convincing them, that no true, solid, lasting happiness is to be found in those enjoyments. He shows them that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; and that the pursuit of

them, as the chief good, will inevitably end in disappointment and misery. More especially does he accomplish this great object by directing their views, and opening their hearts, to perceive the true source of happiness as lying in the favour of God, which is better than life, and so leading them to prize and esteem this above all other things. It is a great thing, no doubt, to be brought to this point, but it requires something more than this, to bring the soul to rest. And therefore, I add,

2. That the gracious Saviour gives his disciples rest from all their self-righteous labour to obtain the favour of God, and acceptance with him, by their own obedience to the divine law. As the great Prophet of his church, by means of his word and Spirit, he opens their minds to perceive the perfection and spirituality of the divine law, and shows them that the commandment is exceeding broad, reaching not only to the outward conduct, but also to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. He discovers to them their own sinfulness, the imperfection that cleaves to all their own obedience, and the impossibility of their being justified by it; while at the same time he reveals to them, the perfection and all-sufficiency of his own obedience for that end.

3. He gives rest to their wounded consciences, by communicating a sense of the remission of sins through his own blood. 'Tis certain that nothing can be a juster ground of disquietude, than a conviction of guilt, and a dread of the divine displeasure. And various are the methods which sinners have recourse to, in order to stifle the one and remove the other, and thus obtain rest to their souls. All such expedients, however, are only momentary palliatives, mere refuges of lies, and they end in nothing but disappointment and sorrow. But Christ, the great physician of souls, gives rest and peace to the troubled conscience, even in the clearest view of the divine character—the most extensive view of the perfect

law of God—and the fullest view of their own personal guilt. And this he does, by shewing them the infinite merit of his own most perfect sacrifice, to answer all the demands of the law and justice of God in their room and place; so that, being justified by faith, they have peace with God, and find rest to their souls on that foundation. Thus the doctrine of the cross becomes a sovereign balm to all their wounds, a cure to all their spiritual diseases and pains. And this leads them to say with the Psalmist, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,—Psalm cxvi. 7.

4. The Lord Jesus gives his followers rest, respecting the way of access unto God, so that they are not left at any uncertainty regarding that most interesting inquiry: “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High?” Nor are they left in doubt as to their success at a throne of grace. They know that their great High Priest is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; and in the faith of this, they draw near to the mercy-seat boldly, pleading in his name for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need. His blood has consecrated for them a new and living way of access to God, through the vail of his flesh; and they draw near with true hearts, in the full assurance of having their prayers heard, and their petitions answered, so far as they are agreeable to the will of God. To which I add,

5. That Christ gives his people rest under all the troubles and disappointments of this mortal state. By the peace which they have in him, they are enabled to possess their souls in patience. They see the shortness of their troubles, and are taught that all things work together for their good—that their great concern is secure: that if afflictions come, they come not by chance—that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth; and they read that,—“Blessed is the man whom the Lord chasteneth, and teacheth him out of his law, that he may give him

*rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.*" This peace and rest the world can neither give nor take away. Their hope of a better inheritance, when the afflictions of life are ended, reconciles them to their lot: and in this way their ambition, pride, and covetousness, as well as their love of pleasure, are mortified. They are content to live as strangers and pilgrims who are travelling through the wilderness of this world, to their Father's house on high. Let me add, that

6. Christ gives his people rest, as to the final issue of their present conflict with their spiritual enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Taking up their cross and following him in the race of faith and patience, they have his sure word of promise, that none of their enemies shall ultimately prevail against them, but that they shall at last be more than conquerors, through him who died for them, and is risen again, and who now intercedes for them at God's right hand. They may, therefore, say with the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us,—Rom. viii. 34—37. And, lastly,

7. Christ gives his followers the lively hope of resting with himself, and with all the redeemed company, "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,"—2 Thes. i. 7—10. "This is the rest that remaineth for the people of God, when the days of their mourning shall be ended,"—Heb. iv. 9. "They shall then rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them,"—Rev. xiv. 13. This world is not destined to be the ultimate rest of the people of God; on the contrary, Christ has apprized his followers, that in the world they shall have tribulation; but for their encouragement he added: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And when about to leave it, he bequeathed "peace" to them

as his last legacy,—John xiv. 27. He assured them that he was going before to prepare mansions of eternal rest for them in heaven, and that he would come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he should be, they might be also. This is the object of their hope, and relying upon his power and faithfulness, they glory in tribulation, knowing that it worketh patience, experience, and hope.

To conclude: what a display does this subject give us of God's wondrous grace and favour to the guilty! of His love to a lost and ruined world, in the provision which he has made for our restoration to his favour, not only for cancelling our guilt by the ransom price paid for our redemption, but also in sending his Gospel among us, as the ministry of reconciliation, and beseeching rebellious creatures to be reconciled unto him, their offended Sovereign! Let each one ask himself what reception he has given to the overtures of mercy—the gracious invitation of the Saviour, “Come unto me, and ye shall find rest to your souls?” Let each one ask the question, “Have I so come to Christ as to find rest for my guilty soul in his finished work?” The heavenly Father delights in it, and has found a sweet savour of rest in it. “He rests in his love;” and his favour descends upon all those, who, like himself, are well-pleased in his beloved Son, and take shelter under the covert of Immanuel's blood. This is the only hiding-place from the storm, and covert from the tempest. “Lo, all they that are afar off from God shall perish.” Be wise, then, in this the day of your merciful visitation. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

## SERMON VII.

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### THE CHRISTIAN NAME AND CHARACTER.

*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

Acts xi. 26.

THERE were two cities of the name of Antioch in the days of the apostles, both of which are mentioned in the New Testament. One is called "Antioch in Pisidia," which was situated in the Lesser Asia, and is mentioned in Acts xiii. 14, &c., where we have on record the substance of a remarkable sermon, which the apostle Paul preached to a mixed multitude of Jews and Gentiles and with wonderful success. That, however, was not the city referred to in my text. The Antioch here spoken of was the ancient capital of Syria—a city of true eastern magnificence, the residence, for many hundred years, of the Macedonian kings of Syria, and afterwards of the Roman governors of the province; so that it obtained the title of "the Queen of the East;" and in point of population and splendour, was the third city of the Roman Empire. This Antioch is remarkable in ecclesiastical history for three things. Here the Gospel was first preached to Grecians, who, on receiving the Christian doctrine, were incorporated into the church,—ver. 20, 21. Here, also, Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the church, under the special direction of the Holy Spirit, to travel through Pagan countries, to make known the everlasting Gospel, and publish Christ Jesus



for salvation unto the ends of the earth,—ch. xiii. 1—13. And here the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians. It is to the credit of the Gospel, that it was at first taught in the most populous, enlightened, and learned cities, never shunning the public eye, but challenging the fullest examination, and that in those cities it obtained numerous converts by conviction, without the aid of force or fraud.

A violent persecution which had arisen at Jerusalem, and in which Stephen, one of the deacons of the church, fell a martyr to the fury of the unbelieving Jews, had in a great measure dispersed the church, and many of the exiles sought an asylum at Antioch,—ver. 19; in general, however, they were not fully instructed in the ends of Christ's death, nor aware that he had broken down the middle wall of partition which had hitherto separated the Jews and the Gentiles, and consequently they had restricted their preaching to the former; but some of them, who were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, were better instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, and these addressed themselves to the Greeks or Grecians, boldly declaring to them the doctrine of Christ crucified,—ver. 20; and then follows an account of the remarkable success which attended their ministry—"the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord,"—ver. 21.

The Holy Spirit, by whom the Scriptures were indited, has seen good to record it as a memorable circumstance, that the disciples of the Saviour first received the name of *Christians* in this city. Let us first direct our attention to *the name*, and then consider what is implied in *the character* thereby indicated. After which, we shall offer a few observations, in the way of improvement.

I. The sacred historian has recorded it as a memorable fact, that the name "Christians" was first given to the disciples of the Saviour at Antioch, where the first church of Gentile believers was planted. Previous

to this time, the followers of Christ had been distinguished by various appellations or titles. They were termed, *disciples, believers, men of the way, callers on the name of Christ*: these are the designations by which they were usually known and distinguished among themselves, while by their enemies they were reproachfully termed, *Nazarenes* and *Galileans*. But here, at Antioch, they first obtained the name of *Christians*, which signifies the disciples, or followers, of Christ. How they acquired this name or title is not very certain: some think that it was given them by their adversaries in the way of reproach—while others are of opinion, that they adopted it of their own accord as a badge of honour. There is, however, a third opinion on the subject, and it is not destitute of probability, namely, that it was given them by revelation, or supernatural suggestion, and that it is this which was foretold in Isa. lxii. 2, where we find it promised to the church, on the Gentiles being brought in, that “she should be called by a *new name*, which the mouth of the Lord should name.” The same thing is repeated, Isa. lxxv. 15, where it said of the rebellious house of Israel, “ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen—for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by *another name*.” In support of this hypothesis, it is remarked, that the original word which in both the passages now quoted is rendered “called,” is in other places translated “revealed,” as in Luke ii. 26, where it is said, “It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit,”—and in Acts x. 22, it is rendered “warned of God,” as in the case of Cornelius. So that when it is said “they were first called Christians at Antioch,”—the meaning *may* be, that they were so *called* of God, or by divine intimation. But whatever there may be in this, one thing is certain, that the name or title suited them so well, that it has, in every subsequent age of the church, been their noblest distinction. They have adopted it by universal con-

sent, and it has been gloried in by all true believers, in the face of their persecutors, even as they have been taught—"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."—1 Pet. iv. 16. The name in itself is the most *proper* that could be given them—it distinguishes them, not only from the world in general, but from the disciples or followers of any other leader than Christ. It is, moreover, a most *honourable* name, expressive of their relation and conformity to HIM, who is constituted both Lord and Christ, or the anointed of God; "therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom they have crucified, both Lord and Christ,"—Acts ii. 36.

So much for the name; let us now consider its scriptural import.

II. Before the rise of Antichrist, this name was distinctive—it formed the line of demarcation, if we may so speak, between the disciples of Christ, and the world lying in the wicked one—between those who were born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, and such as knew not God, nor obeyed the Gospel of his Son. But since the days of Constantine the Great,—when Christianity became essentially corrupted, and a form of godliness was drawn over whole nations, the great mass of whom were strangers to its power—the real, scriptural, primitive import of the term has been generally lost sight of—men are now made Christians, not by conviction and the force of truth, but by being born in what is called a Christian country, and by having what is erroneously termed baptism administered to them in their infancy, without their knowledge or consent, and in consequence of certain sponsors having engaged, that, when they arrive at years of maturity, they "shall renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world," and I know

not what besides. Now, as all this is quite foreign to the New Testament, and in flat opposition to its leading principles, it becomes absolutely necessary that we distinguish between real and nominal Christians, if we would not deceive ourselves and others in this matter. We must look carefully into the Scriptures, and examine what constituted any one a Christian in the days of the apostles, and acknowledge none as such but those who hold the same principles, and walk in the same course. On this maxim, then, we observe,

1. That a Christian is one who *believes* in the Lord Jesus Christ, or who gives full credit to what the Gospel testifies concerning him—that is, concerning the dignity of his person, as the Son of God, or Word made flesh—the ends of his mission into this world, namely, to save sinners—the offices he sustains in the economy of redemption, as the Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church—his great work of obedience and suffering, whereby he fulfilled all righteousness, satisfied the law and justice of God, and made complete atonement for the sins of the guilty—the blessings and benefits he has procured for all who believe, and put their whole trust in him, as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour, every way answerable to their lost and needy situation—his resurrection from the dead, according to the Scriptures, which is the great proof of the sufficiency of his work, and of the Father's good pleasure in it—his ascension into heaven—and his second coming to raise the dead, and reward all his faithful followers, by conferring upon them eternal life in the heavenly state. These are the rudiments, or first principles, of the Christian doctrine; they were firmly held by all the disciples of Christ, in the days of the apostles, and without this belief of them, no one can be a Christian, for it is by faith that men become connected with Christ, and partake of his salvation. Hence it is said, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the

Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,"—John iii. 36. Again, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life,—1 John v. 11, 12. "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end,"—Heb. iii. 14. In the Holy Scriptures, Christians and believers are synonymous terms; indeed, an unbelieving Christian is a contradiction in terms—such a character cannot possibly exist.

2. A Christian is a *disciple* of Christ: and so the text tells us, that it was the *disciples* who were called Christians. The word *disciple* signifies one who is *taught* or *instructed* in the doctrine of the Gospel, or first principles of the doctrine of Christ. So Christ commissioned his apostles to teach, or *disciple* all nations, which they were to do by preaching his Gospel,—Matt. xxviii. 19. Accordingly we read, Acts xiv. 21, that "when they had preached the Gospel in that city, and *taught many*, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the *disciples*, and exhorting them to continue *in the faith*." They had heard of Christ—they believed the doctrine that was taught them, and thus they became the disciples of Christ, owned him to be the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners—the anointed Prophet, Priest and King, and, consequently, gave themselves up to his teaching—like Mary, to sit at his feet and hear his doctrine, taking his yoke upon them and learning of Him, who was meek and lowly of heart. Now, this is the character of all real Christians; not only do they submit to be taught the way of salvation, so as to part with all their own fond imaginations about virtue and happiness, and to say with the apostle Peter, "thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," but they continue to maintain this character, and cultivate this teach-

able disposition of a disciple to the last hour of life. The Christian life is a growth in knowledge, and it is compared to the course of the sun in the firmament, shining more and more unto the perfect day,—2 Pet. iii. 18; Prov. iv. 18. The apostle Paul furnishes us with a striking example in his own person of the truth of this observation. Perhaps no man ever knew more of the doctrines of the Gospel than he did; yet we find him, to his latest breath, pressing after an increase of the excellent knowledge of Christ,—Phil. iii. 9, &c.; and, on another occasion, he speaks of himself as knowing only *in part*,—1 Cor. xiii. 9. So entirely synonymous are the terms Christian and disciple.

3. To be a Christian *indeed*, it is necessary to *have the Spirit of Christ*: for it is expressly said, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,”—Rom. viii. 9; and if he be none of Christ’s, or do not belong to Him, he surely cannot be a Christian. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit,” which is the Spirit of Truth. His influence is necessary to enlighten the understanding, and give the knowledge of Christ’s true character, so producing faith unfeigned.—He shines into the heart, communicating the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. He dwells in the Christian as the Spirit of sanctification or holiness,—Titus iii. 2; and 1 Pet. i. 2; and also as the Comforter, giving the Christian a knowledge of his adoption,—Rom. v. 5. ch. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 6,—and being, I may add, the earnest of his heavenly inheritance,—Eph. i. 13, 14.

4. A real Christian must necessarily *love Christ supremely*, and prefer his salvation to every thing else—yea, even to life itself. Our Lord absolutely denies that any one can be his true disciple, without this supreme love to him, and we must all allow him to be the best judge of what is essential to true discipleship. Let us hear his own words on the subject: “He that loveth father or mother more than me is

not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me,"—Matt. x. 37, 38. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple: and whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple:"—"So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple,"—Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33. There is no true love to Christ, but what is predominant. To love him as much as the dearest object on earth, is not true love; we do not love him at all, unless we love him supremely. We must *sell all* for him—suffer the *loss of all* for him—count all things as dross and dung for him,—Phil. iii. 7, 8; otherwise we cannot be his disciples. A less attachment will infallibly leave us under the prevailing influence of this present evil world, like the stony and thorny ground hearers, mentioned in our Lord's parable of the Sower,—Matt. xiii; or the rich young man, whose case is recorded, in Mark x. 17—23. We have a striking exemplification of the truth of this fact in the conduct of those that were bidden to the marriage feast,—Matt. xxii. 5. "They made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." The feast was in itself well enough, but the concerns of this life suited them better; and when the time came to make their election between the two, we see which had the preference. And this holds out a striking lesson to us, the sum of which is, that if we are Christ's genuine disciples, we shall love him and his salvation above all other objects, and give them a decided preference in our judgment and affections.

5. A real Christian is one who *obeys* and *follows* Christ. Here again it is necessary to quote his own words: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I

command you—so shall ye be my disciples,”—John xv. 14, 8. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments,”—1 John v. 3. The Lord Jesus repels all pretensions to Christianity which are destitute of this test. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”—Luke vi. 46; plainly intimating that he makes no account of a profession of discipleship, which is not accompanied by obedience to his commands. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,”—Matt. vii. 21. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments,” saith the apostle, “is a liar, and the truth is not in him,”—1 John ii. 4. And now that the subject is before us, it may not be unprofitable to take a short review of some of our Lord’s commands to his professed followers.

And I begin with his new and distinguishing command of loving one another, which we have in John xiii. 34. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” In these words he sets before his followers the law of love as the animating principle of their social intercourse, as that by which he would have them distinguished from all the world around them; not by their vociferation and flaming zeal for orthodoxy, but by the exercise of brotherly kindness and charity; here is the leading test of discipleship.

Again, as respects their deportment towards their enemies, hear what he says: “I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also: And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also: And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain: Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow



of thee, turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust: For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,"—Matt. v. 39—48.

Surely, it cannot be necessary to remind you, how opposite these maxims are to the course of this present evil world, and what a system of non-conformity they inculcate. But where shall we find them exemplified among the various classes of professors with which we are surrounded in the present day? Yet they are the commands of Christ, and he expects all his disciples to pay implicit obedience to them.

Again: The Lord of Christians calls his disciples to renounce both the *cares* and *lusts* of this world. With regard to the former, the distracting cares of this world, he thus commands: "Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these: Wherefore, if God so clothe the

grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?—for after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things: But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself;—sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”—Matt. vi. 25—34. These sayings, which are of unrivalled beauty, respect our trust and confidence in God for the supply of our daily wants, and sufficiently mark that contented state of mind, with the allotments of Providence, which should characterize the Christian. The following relate to the lusts of this world, or the fleshly appetites which require to be mortified: “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell: And if thy right-hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell,”—ch. v. 29, 30. In this way I might proceed with a great variety of other subjects on which the Christian lawgiver hath delivered his will, but what hath been now stated may suffice on this head.

6. A Christian is one who looks forward to Christ's second appearance, and lives in the hope of its taking place. This is an article of revealed truth; and hence the disciples of Christ are represented as having been “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God: and to *wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come:” and as “*looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God*

and Saviour Jesus Christ." The saints of God, under the former dispensation, were distinguished by their hope of the Messiah's advent in the fulness of time, and thus praying for it: "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" So are true Christians characterized as "those who *love his appearing,*" and whose fervent aspiration is, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." While those who have their portion in this life are still saying, as did the scoffers of old, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and deprecating the event as an evil to be dreaded,—the real followers of Christ rejoice in the hope and prospect of it, as a consummation devoutly to be wished, an event that shall put an end to all their pains, and sorrows, and sufferings—giving them full possession of the crown and kingdom. The Christian passes the time of his sojourning here in fear—keeping in view his final account, remembering the exhortation, "Gird up the loins of your minds; be sober, and hope perfectly for the grace which shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." True, he knows that "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment;" but his consolation is, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and that unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation." That he will come to raise the dead, and judge the world, and bless his faithful followers with complete salvation, the Scriptures most plainly testify; for when he was about to leave the earth and take possession of his throne and kingdom, he thus addressed his disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The Christian well knows, that the second coming of Christ is necessary to perfect the

economy of grace. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, we cannot be ignorant, that a day is fast approaching, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise; then those who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord."

This hope, from its very nature, must possess a sanctifying influence. It led the holy apostle Paul to regulate his whole conduct and deportment with a view to it, and to say, "Therefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." The apostle Peter, towards the close of his second epistle, taking a survey of the grand and glorious events which are to take place at the second coming of Christ, events which are eminently adapted, by their sublimity and grandeur, to fill the mind of every Christian with joy unspeakable and full of glory,—founds upon it this remarkable exhortation: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless:"—that is, that ye may stand before the Son of Man with acceptance, as his faithful and approved servants. And the beloved disciple John thus states the doctrine: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." The true Christian takes Christ for his pattern and example; and amidst all his transgressions and imperfections, which he daily bewails and mourns over, he aims at nothing short of a complete conformity unto Him in his temper and spirit; for that which "a good hope through grace," centres in, is not only to see him as he is, but to be made "like him." And this will

infallibly be the case with all his redeemed people, when he shall come again to ransom them from the power of the grave, fashion their bodies like unto his own glorious body, and take them to his eternal kingdom.

It remains for us now to make an application of what has been said,—or to shew what improvement we should draw from this subject.

It certainly opens a wide field for the exercise of the duty of self-examination. I think we must all admit, that if what has now been said is consistent with revealed truth, (and I know not how it can be gain-said,) it will follow that there are much fewer real Christians in the world than most people are apt to imagine. If Christ himself acknowledges none as belonging to him, but such as understand and believe the truth testified concerning himself—such as are under the influence and guidance of his Holy Spirit—such as are led to love him supremely, delight in his salvation, and count all other things as mere dross and filth when brought into competition with it—such as are led by a principle of love to the Saviour to obey his commands and imitate his example, by taking up the cross and following him,—then, I say, we shall be compelled to form a very different estimate of the number of real Christians, even in this (so called) Christian country, from what is commonly entertained. It is one thing to bear the name, and another to sustain the character of a Christian, and justify its application to ourselves. In primitive times, and before Christianity became corrupted from its simplicity, the Christians were a sect everywhere spoken against—but on what account? It was because the holiness of their lives was a practical condemnation of the vicious conduct of their unbelieving neighbours;—“They think it strange,” says the apostle Peter, “that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, *speaking evil of you*,”—1 Pet. iv. 4. It was on account of their love and attachment

to Christ, and their conformity to him whom they worshipped as their God and Saviour, that they were reviled, persecuted, defamed, ill-treated, “accounted the filth of the world and offscouring of all things:” but the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon them, and God was glorified in them and by them, ver. 12—14. But, beloved brethren, how is it with us individually and collectively? Let us bring the subject home to ourselves:—“If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself: but let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another,”—Gal. vi. 3, 4.

Further: I think it must appear from what has been already said, that “the worthy name of Christian” is sadly abused, when it is conferred on the great mass of entire nations, who are following the course of this evil world, pursuing “the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,”—“living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” Such are *of the world* that lieth in the wicked one, and ought to consider themselves, and be considered by others, as being actually in that state. Nothing but a sound profession, and walk becoming the Gospel, can warrant us to call any man a Christian. If there be any truth in the Scriptures, all others are, undoubtedly, *Infidels*; and this abuse of the term causes the name of Christ to be undeservedly reproached. In fact, the application of the name, where the thing itself is wanting, is an evil greatly to be deplored—it gives a wrong view of Christianity, builds up sinful mortals in presumption, and mingles Christians with “the world of the ungodly.”

Finally: we may learn from the view that we have taken of this subject, that no one can be a Christian, merely from being born in a country where Christianity is professed—nor from birth or parentage: neither can he be made such by being sprinkled in infancy, or immersed when adult, unless on a sincere profession of faith in Christ. To be a Christian, in the scripture sense of that term, a

man must be born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, so as to put off the old man with his corrupt practices, and be renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him—he must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, not in profession merely, but in the temper and spirit of his mind, and walk even as he walked. Nay, the strictest moral conduct, without faith in Christ, does not constitute any one a Christian; neither does the soundest creed, without love and obedience to Christ's commands, for that is "faith without works," which the apostle James pronounces a vain thing. We may be connected with the strictest sect, and numbered among the followers of the Lamb, in human estimation, while destitute of the Spirit and image of Christ, and be at last rejected by Him!—Matt. vii. 21, &c.

I conclude with the words of a living writer, when discussing this same text of scripture:—

"It is of immense importance that we attend to the true and proper meaning of this appellation [Christian]:—that is, to the meaning of it, as it is used in the Bible. For, if our professed Christianity will not stand *this* test, what is it worth? If it will not abide this test, neither will it endure the scrutiny of the great day. According to the Scriptures, Christians are possessed of special privileges and peculiar hopes, to which he, who is not a Christian, has no legitimate title. These privileges and hopes are of inestimable value; and the value of them gives proportionate importance to the inquiry, whether we be Christians in the Bible acceptance of them. To be *called* Christians by our fellow men—to be addressed indiscriminately as Christians from the pulpit is nothing—it will not make you what you are called. The question is not, what you are *called*, but what you *are*; the touchstone by which this must be determined is the word of God:—and on the answer to the inquiry depends, as to each of us, the happiness of eternity." These are solemn considerations. May we all lay them to heart!

## SERMON VIII.

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### THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

*For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

THE effects which the Gospel produced upon the hearts and lives of the apostles, appeared very strange to their unbelieving neighbours, who were greatly perplexed how to account for it. And it was more especially so in the case of the apostle Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. When his eyes were opened to know the Saviour, or, as he himself expresses it, (Gal. i. 15, &c.) “when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him,” and he was led to realize the amazing love of Christ, in becoming poor in order to make him rich—to die for him that he might live—he was transported with love and gratitude, and only wished to remain here that he might promote the Redeemer’s glory in the world, and benefit his fellow-creatures. But there was one thing in the conduct of Paul, which distinguished him in some degree from the other apostles, and tended to heighten the surprise, and, I may say, the disgust of many of his countrymen; and that was, the freedom with which he published the glad tidings of salvation to Gentiles as well as Jews. This



was intolerable to them; it struck at the root of one of their strongest prejudices; for it was a favourite maxim with them, that whatever were the blessings of their Messiah's reign, the Jews alone were to inherit them, to the exclusion of the poor outcast Gentiles; whereas, this apostle made no difference whatever between the two classes, but proclaimed the same good news to men of every nation, tribe, and tongue—barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, circumcised or uncircumcised. And what said the bigoted Jews to this? Why, they pronounced him mad; and as you may see upon one occasion, in Acts xxii. 22, when he was accounting for this part of his conduct, by telling them that Christ had given him a commission to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles, it is said, "They gave him audience to this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.'"

Now, if you examine the verses preceding my text, you will find that the apostle is upon the very same subject. He is vindicating his apostleship, his ministry, and his conduct, from the malicious insinuations of the corrupt, judaizing, false teachers, who had crept into the church at Corinth, and raised a faction against him. The zeal which Paul manifested in maintaining the freedom of the Gentiles from the law of Moses, and their equal privileges with believing Jews, in the kingdom of Christ, they attributed to his being "beside himself,"—ver 13. And from this he takes occasion to mention the grand animating principle, which influenced him in preaching the Gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews—viz. the love of Christ in dying for the one class as well as the other: it was because they thus judged, that if one died for all, then were all dead—that is, both Jews and Gentiles were all under sin, and condemned to receive its wages, which is death,—Rom. iii. 9, 19; so that as the Jew had no better claim than the Gentile, neither was the Gentile excluded, for "the

divine righteousness is unto and upon all that believe, for there is no difference,"—ver. 22. And from Christ's dying for both, or all, the apostle also judged, that they who lived by his death, were laid under the strongest obligations to live, not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. You will find him urging the very same doctrine upon the Romans, ch. xiv. 7, 8, 9, where he says, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's; for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

Now, in the words of the text, thus introduced, we have the apostle's account of the natural *state of all* those for whom Christ died;—also, the *ends* which were to be accomplished by *Christ's death and resurrection*;—and, lastly, the *motives* arising therefrom, to live unto him. We shall consider each of these, and then improve the subject.

I. We are reminded, by the words of the text, what was the state of all those for whom the Saviour died. The apostle declares that it was a state of death; and he infers it from the fact of Christ's dying for them. "We thus judge," says he, "that if one died for all, then were all dead." This is a just inference from the premises—that if Christ died for all, then all were guilty, and legally condemned to that death which he suffered in their stead; for had this not been the case with them, there had been no occasion for his laying down his life *for them*. Considered in this point of view, therefore, the death of Christ, on their account, demonstrates that they were in a state of death and condemnation, when he undertook their cause, and interposed for their deliverance; and so they were by nature children of wrath, even as others,

—Eph. ii. 3. And this is the uniform testimony of the Scriptures respecting them; in proof of which, I shall refresh your memories with a few texts. Thus the prophet Isaiah, when predicting the sufferings which the Messiah should undergo, in order to accomplish the ends of his mission into our world, says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all,”—ch. liii. 6. The language of the apostle, Rom. iii., is an echo to this—“Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin,”—ver. 9. “There is none righteous, no, not one—there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God,”—ver. 10, 11. This is the language of the divine law to them that are under it—it stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world guilty before God,”—ver. 19; “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”—ver. 23. Observe, further, how the apostle states the condition of those for whom Christ died, ch. v. “They were *ungodly* and *without strength* to deliver themselves,”—ver. 6.—“They were *sinner*s, exposed to the wrath of heaven,”—ver. 8, 9. “*Enemies* to God, in their minds by wicked works,”—ver. 10; Col. i. 21. Such was the state of those for whom the Lord of life and glory submitted to undergo the ignominious death of the cross, in order that they might be rescued from the just demerit of their transgressions: and the amazing greatness of the remedy proves, how dreadful and desperate their condition was! It is termed by the inspired writers, a state of *death* and of *condemnation*—in which the *wrath of God abides upon us*,—John iii. 36; ch. v. 24. And while the subject is before us, let us beware of putting the cheat upon ourselves, and saying, “This, to be sure, is an awful state to be in; but, thank God, it does not apply to me, nor ever did—I was born in a Christian country—my parents were professors, and took care to bring me within the bounds of the covenant when I was an infant, by having me

baptized, &c. They gave me a religious education—and, by the grace of God, I have been restrained from open acts of profligacy.” Now all this may be true, and yet, after all, you may be still in nature’s darkness, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity—exposed to wrath and condemnation. The great question is, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” There is no deliverance from that dreadful state without this—for so runs the record, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,”—John iii. 36. And on this we have his own testimony: “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,”—ch. v. 24. And, then, remember further, that true faith is always operative, and works by love; so that, if you really believe on the Son of God, you will receive him as your *Prophet*, to instruct you—your atoning *Priest*, to whose blood alone you will look for pardon and acceptance with God—and your *King*, to rule and direct you in all your goings. This, then, is the standard by which you ought to try your state; and beware of deceiving yourself on a matter of such vast importance! We now proceed,

II. To consider the ends of Christ’s death and resurrection. The apostle declares in the text, that Christ died for his people, and rose again; but for what purposes did he thus act? What ends were to be accomplished by these events? To this we answer,

1. It was to redeem them from that death to which they were all subject; or, in other words, to deliver them from the guilt and punishment of sin.

The language of scripture, in reference to the death of Christ, is very significant and expressive, and such as merits our particular attention. For instance: the death which he suffered is represented as a *curse* due to

sin; hence it is said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being *made a curse* for us,"—Gal. iii. 13. Sometimes his death is held forth under the notion of a *sacrifice* for sin; and in this view it is the substance or body of all the sacrifices that were offered under the law of Moses,—Heb. x. 10,—the antitype of the Paschal Lamb: for it is said, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us,"—1 Cor. v. 7; 2 Cor. v. 21. At other times, it is spoken of as an *atonement*, or reconciliation; as in Rom. v. 10, 11,—“For if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled to God by the death of his Son*, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life: And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom we have now received the atonement.*” The death of Christ is spoken of as a *bearing of sins*, or the punishment due to them. In this way the apostle writes of it to the Hebrews,—Heb. ix. 28. “Christ was once offered, to *bear the sins* of many.” And Peter also says, “Himself *bare our sins* in his own body on the tree,—1 Pet. ii. 24. When, therefore, it is said in our text, that “he died for all,” the meaning is, that he suffered the punishment due to the sins of his people; and in so doing, has dissolved their obligation to suffer, and procured for them the forgiveness of sins, and a title to everlasting life. And so when they believe on him, they are no more in a state of death and condemnation, but pass from death unto life—and in this sense they are *those who live*, as the apostle expresses it in our text. This, then, is one great and principal end of Christ’s death;—it is to deliver his people from the condemning sentence of the divine law, and bring those who, by nature, were children of wrath, the slaves of sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

2. But another and further end of Christ’s death is, “that they who thus live, in virtue of his death, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.” The gracious Redeemer

died—not only to obtain the pardon of his people, and procure their peace with God—not only that he might deliver them from wrath; but “he gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,”—Titus ii. 14. His death was a ransom price, whereby he purchased them to himself as his peculiar property, that they should not henceforth “live unto themselves,”—that is, that they should not pursue their own carnal, worldly interests, nor give themselves up to the indulgence of their own unbridled lusts and passions, that they should not make their own honour, ease, and pleasure, the end of their living in the world; but should devote their redeemed lives to the service, the honour, and the glory of him, who died for them, and rose again. To neglect this would be to persist in what Peter calls their “vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers,”—the course of this evil world, handed down by example from sire to son, but from which they are “redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,”—1 Pet. i. 21. “Who gave himself for our sins,” says the apostle, Gal. i. 4, “that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” This, then, is another important end which Christ had in view in laying down his life for his people, and the means by which he secures it are—his word and Spirit; he sanctifies them through his truth, and influences them by motives suited to work upon their hearts and affections—he draws them to himself with the cords of a man, with bands of love, suited to their nature. And this brings me to the last particular I proposed to consider,—which was,

III. To advert to some of the motives which the text suggests, why believers should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again. And here, the first thing that strikes our minds

is, *his great love in dying for them*. Surely, this ought to have a powerfully constraining influence upon us, as it manifestly had upon the apostle Paul. It is scarcely necessary to say, that to feel the force of this motive, we must know and believe the love that God has to us; we must know and believe that Christ loved us, and gave himself for us. We cannot be influenced by a motive which we do not believe. And can we really believe, that the beloved Son of God died for us, to redeem us from so great a death, and procure for us everlasting life, and not feel any emotions of gratitude constraining us to live to him? In the nature of things this cannot be. Bring the matter to the test of experience—how is it in regard to the things of this world? Suppose an individual to be involved in difficulties which threaten his utter ruin. By a train of imprudent conduct, he is reduced to the most abject circumstances of meanness and distress. If he look back upon his past life, conscience accuses him of having wilfully plunged himself in misery and wretchedness—if he look forward, he sees nothing in prospect, but suffering and sorrow. In the hour of his extremity, one who knew him in his better days, has his eye upon him, and pities his indiscretion, well knowing where it will ultimately lead him, voluntarily steps forward to his relief, extricates him from all his difficulties, and places him in more favourable circumstances than he ever before enjoyed—and all this out of pure compassion and motives of philanthropy. What, I ask, must be the feelings of the person thus relieved? Will there be no return of gratitude to his generous benefactor? What should we think of the man who could requite such kindness with sullen apathy and indifference? Turn your thoughts now to Calvary; contemplate the Lord of life and glory nailed to the cross, and there suffering under the wrath of God—the victim of human sin, and hearken to his expiring cry, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?” But, for whom was he “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted?” For whom

was his body broken, and his blood poured out? Who were the *lost* beings whom he came to seek and save? For whom did he give his life a ransom? Whose sins did he wash away? Whose debt did he cancel? I answer, it was yours, if you really believe in him! Those who are now before me, and to whom I am speaking, are the immortal, guilty, ruined, hell-deserving sinners, whom he came to redeem, for whom he laid down his life, shed his precious blood, expired under the wrath of God! To you, then, I address myself in the language of expostulation and entreaty. Call to mind your Redeemer's love—consider it well, meditate upon it intently, ponder it in your hearts, realize its properties. It was love *unfeigned*, not a mere verbal profession, which led to no beneficial results—it was *self-denying*, and led to the bitterest sufferings, in order to benefit others—it was *pure* and *disinterested*, unmixed with any alloy of self-interest; for when he gave himself for his people, and suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God, he could say, “For their sakes I sanctify myself!” And again, as he does in ancient prophecy, “Then I restored that which I took not away,—Ps. lxxix. 4. The consideration of these things led the apostle thus to judge, that they who live in virtue of the Saviour's death, “should not live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.” The perception which he had of the love of Christ, drew out his whole soul in the way of love and gratitude towards his benefactor—and his whole life was an expression of those feelings.

2. Another motive which influenced the apostle in this way of judging was—a consideration of the property which the Saviour had acquired in him, by purchasing him with his blood, and the right which he consequently had to all his services. Observe how he addresses the Corinthians: “Ye are not your own—for ye are bought with a price,”—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Thus, also, Peter writes: “Ye know that ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold;



but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,"—1 Pet. i. 18, &c. It is upon this principle that the apostle grounds that remarkable exhortation, which he gave the believers<sup>m</sup> at Rome, ch. xii. 1: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is *your reasonable service.*" Certainly, if our lives are the purchase of his death—if we live in virtue of his having died for us, then nothing can be more reasonable than that we should consider ourselves to be his property—that we should hold ourselves at his disposal—study his will, and be devoted to his service. And, oh, my brethren, happy would it be for us, could we always carry this idea about us, and have it present to our minds, that we are not our own property—not at our own disposal—that Jesus bought us by his blood—that he redeemed us to be unto himself a peculiar people, formed for his praise. What an example of devotedness to the will of God, and the service of his Divine Master, have we in the apostle Paul! Take a review, at your leisure, of his life and labours, in promoting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world—his zealous exertions in preaching the Gospel, and teaching sinners the way of salvation; consider the hardships he endured—the sufferings to which he was exposed, and of which he has given us a catalogue in a chapter subsequent to the text; See 2 Cor. xi. 23—27. And withal, observe his reply to such of his friends as would have persuaded him to spare himself: "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts xxi. 13, 14. "The Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me: but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord

Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God,"—ch. xx. 23, 24. And, so upon another occasion, we find him saying, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; for to me to live is to promote the glory of Christ, and to die is gain,"—Phil. i. 20, 21. Here, brethren, is an instance of the power of faith and love, and an example for our imitation. But further,

3. Another motive which influenced the apostle to devote himself to the service of Christ, and which ought also to influence all his true followers is, his *sovereignty* over them as Lord and Redeemer, the head and husband of his church—and *that* by virtue of his dying, and rising again.

There is something very wonderful in the Saviour's condescending love and kindness towards his redeemed people. They are his *purchased possession*: he "gave himself for them, an offering and sacrifice to God, of a sweet smelling savour," and thus he manifested his love for them. "He purchased the church with his own blood."—He is their Lord, and the just object of their worship,—Ps. xlv. 11. He is their rightful King and Sovereign, for he is head over all things to the church, which is his mystical body. All dominion and rule centre in him, for all power is committed into his hands, both in heaven and earth. One would think it were sufficient, therefore, for him to promulgate his laws and make known his will, to entitle him to the unreserved obedience of his subjects. But look, I beseech you, at the grace and condescension which characterize his gentle reign. "Ye call me Master and Lord," says he, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."—John

xiii. 15. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Again: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."—John xv. 9, &c.

Such is the condescending grace of heaven's exalted King, toward the unworthy objects of his love—he stoops down from his high abode, holds the most tender and endearing intercourse with them, as though they were his equals, and draws them in the paths of dutiful obedience, with the cords of a man, with bands of love. Well might the poet say—

"Oh, let thy love our hearts constrain,  
 Jesus the crucified!  
 What hast thou done our hearts to gain?  
 Languish'd, and groan'd, and died!"

Remember, Christian, that he whom you acknowledge as your Lord and Master, your God and Saviour, has set before you his own love as a pattern for your imitation. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, *as I have loved you*,"—John xv. 12. Think of the properties of *his* love; how free and disinterested! how entirely self-moved! Think, too, how operative and self-denying—how compassionate and tender—how full of mercy towards the miserable! Harken to his last voice when expiring on the cross: "Father, for-

give them, for they know not what they do!" Such were some of the properties of the love of Christ, but of which the apostle tells us, that its magnitude passes knowledge—

“Vig'rous it reign'd thro' all his life,  
And triumph'd in his death.”

And this is that love of which the apostle, in my text, tells us, that he felt its powerful influence constraining him to live not unto himself, but to Him “who died for him, and rose again.”

4. Finally, a due regard to our own *interest*, if properly considered, must influence us to live to him “who died for us, and rose again.” Our own present, as well as future happiness, is inseparably connected with *living to him*, and not to ourselves.

It is an affecting proof of human degeneracy, that motives of self-interest will generally be found to affect us more, and gain a more powerful hold of our hearts, than a regard to the glory of God, and the obligations we are laid under by all his mercies, whether in providence or grace. Well, suppose we take up the subject in this point of view—if the case be properly examined, it will be found that the believer's interest, both for time and eternity, is most deeply involved in his giving himself up unreservedly to the service of Christ, and living unto him. Now, consider, if he do not live to Christ, he must live to himself; but if he live to himself, he must live to sin, and that is present misery. It is impossible there can be any real happiness in the practice of sin; our own dear-bought experience will attest that. Holiness and happiness go together; there can be no happiness in Christ without loving and serving him—there can be no future enjoyment of him without holiness. The service of sin is present misery, and its wages, death—not merely the death of the body, but eternal banishment from the presence

of God, and the glory of his power—the blackness of darkness for ever. This is very melancholy; but reverse the picture. In keeping the commands of Christ there is a present reward—the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me—and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him,”—John xiv. 21—23.

What now is it that we learn from the subject which we have had under consideration? Is it not this, that there is no true religion without love—love to God for his unspeakable gift, the gift of his beloved Son—love to Christ for his unparalleled love towards us? This is the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian religion; and all pretensions to it, where love is wanting, are but as sounding brass or tinkling cymbals. “If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha, accursed when the Lord shall come,” saith an apostle.

“Talk they of morals, oh, thou bleeding love!  
Thou maker of new morals to mankind!  
The grand morality is *love of thee.*”

Here, then, is matter for self-examination to us all. Let us bring the subject home to ourselves. How stand our hearts affected towards the Saviour, who has done so much to gain our love? Remember that love is an operative principle, and that whenever it takes possession of the human heart, it is not dormant or inactive; it never fails to excite to laborious exertions in behalf of the object beloved. Hence the apostle speaks of the *labour* of love, as well as the patience of hope. Is it asked by any, how love to Christ manifests itself? the answer is easy—it is by keeping his commandments. We

learn this from his own lips,—“He that loveth me, keepeth my commands: Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

“’Tis love that makes our willing feet,  
In swift obedience move;  
The devils know, and tremble too,  
But Satan cannot love.”

Here I might descend to particulars, and point out to you some of the leading commands of the Saviour. As for instance, if you love him, you will love his people; for it is his new command, delivered when he was just about to leave the world: “A new command I give unto you, that ye should love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.”

Again: if you love Christ, you will love *his cause and interest* in the world. This lies near his own heart, and therefore ought to lie near to the hearts of his disciples. How are you affected towards it? Is it your daily prayer, “thy kingdom come?” Well, do not rest satisfied with merely praying for its increase in the world, but add to that your best endeavours to promote it. Remember that its constituent principles are “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.” Study the Saviour’s character—imbibe his spirit—walk in his steps—copy his example, in his fervent love to his heavenly Father—to his own people—to the world at large—and let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Let no man please himself, but every one seek his neighbour’s good to edification. “Walk in love, as *Christ also hath loved you, and given himself for you.*” Oh, what a powerful motive is this! Think upon it, believer, once more, and take a realizing view of it. Was

there ever love like his love—compassion like his compassion—or condescension like his condescension? Whoever could, whoever did, humble himself like the Son of God? On whose cheeks ever flowed tears of sympathy for human wo, so pure as those he shed? Whose bowels ever moved with such compassion, as that which dissolved his heart in tender mercies for the afflicted sons and daughters of men? Who ever, even for his friends, endured such contradiction of sinners against himself—submitted to such indignation—sustained such accumulated sorrows and griefs—suffered such agonies of mind and body, as those which he endured in giving his life an offering for his *enemies*? Forsaken by his God—abandoned by his friends—destitute of every stay—surrounded by the fiercest enemies, the most implacable foes,—whose hearts were harder than adamant, insulting the very pangs which they inflicted,—he expired on the accursed tree! The heavens darkened at the sight—the sun covered his face—the earth trembled—the rocks split—the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, and dead men left their graves. All nature stood agast, when Roman soldiers, urged by blood-thirsty priests, nailed Him to the cross; when “the chief priests, scribes, and elders” said in derision, “He saved others; cannot he save himself?” The person who perceives not, who feels not, the eloquence of his love consummated in his death—the tenderness of his entreaties and expostulations, is not to be reasoned with—is not to be moved by human power. Will you not, then, honour your reason by honouring the Son of God—by giving up your understandings, your wills, your affections, to the teaching of the Holy Spirit—to the guidance of the Saviour’s love? Then, and only then, can you be safe, and feel yourselves secure and happy.

## SERMON IX.

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### JESUS CHRIST THE FOUNDATION OF HIS CHURCH.

*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

1 Cor. iii. 11.

THE HOLY SPIRIT, by whose agency the sacred Scriptures were indited, has been pleased, in gracious condescension to our weakness, to make use of similitudes drawn from things, either in nature or art, with which we are conversant, to illustrate to us subjects of a spiritual and heavenly kind. Thus, for instance, in the verses preceding the text, the apostle, who spake under his inspiration, had described the Corinthian church by the metaphor of God's husbandry, field, or tillage, which he himself had planted, and Apollos watered, ver. 6—9. He then changes the metaphor from that of a plantation to the more usual figure of a building, house, or temple, and speaks of himself as the architect or master-builder of this spiritual house, ver. 10. And as this points out his pre-eminence in that work above other builders who laboured with him, it must relate to his office as an apostle, and to his having laid the foundation suited to such a building, when he first preached the Gospel and planted the believers as a church, as we read in Acts, ch. xviii. He takes care, however, not to attribute this pre-eminence to any merit or natural wis-



dom in himself, but resolves the whole into the grace of God bestowed upon him: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon; but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon; for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,"—ver. 10, 11. In further enlarging upon the words of the text, and attempting an illustration of them, we shall consider,—

The nature and excellency of this foundation:—enquire by whom, and how, this foundation was laid:—and, then the superstructure that is raised upon it.

I. The person who is laid for a foundation is JESUS CHRIST, the Son of the living God, as the text expressly declares. And, as regards his character, we have the fullest and most satisfactory information in the Holy Scripture, which abundantly testifies of the infinite dignity of his person, declaring Him to be the WORD, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, and by whom all things were made. He is further set forth as made flesh, of the seed of Abraham and David, and so being God incarnate, or manifest in the flesh,—1 Tim. iii. 16. In my text, he is called *Jesus*, that is, a Saviour, and *Christ*, or the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King; which titles point out his relation to the building, and the place he sustains in it. There are two other passages of scripture which hold him forth as a foundation, and also describe his chief excellencies in this point of view; and it may be useful to us to quote them. The first is, Isa. xxviii. 16. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." This passage, you know, is quoted in 1 Pet. ii. 6; and applied to Jesus Christ. For having spoken of him as "a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ver. 4, the Apostle adds, "Wherefore also it is contained in scripture, Behold I

lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded," ver. 6. These two passages, one from the prophet, and the other from the apostle, serve to throw additional light upon our text, and point out to us some of the chief excellencies of this foundation, which we shall now take into consideration.

1. He is called a *stone*, a *chief corner-stone*. And this shews that he not only *sustains*, but *unites* the whole edifice. It also points out his pre-eminence in the building. The properties of a stone are solidity, stability, and durableness, all which centre in Christ, for he is the Rock of ages, eternal in his duration, "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." Israel of old in their congregated state, and forming one camp, were a type of the true church of God, and among them the chief of the people, or heads of tribes, were termed the *corners*,—Judg. xx. 2. *margin*. They were the corner-stones of the people, serving to keep the multitude together as one compact body; (See also 1 Sam. xiv. 38.) agreeably to which, Christ, in reference to his supreme power and wisdom, is the *head* corner-stone. "The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner; or, more properly, the chief corner-stone,—Psalm cxviii. 22. He is the chief top-stone of the corner, sustaining the most important place in the building.

2. He is a *tried stone*. There is, probably, an allusion here to the practice of builders, in making trial of the quality of the stone which they are about to use in laying the foundation of a building, for it is very certain, that all stone is not equally durable and fit for the purpose. And when the epithet is applied to Christ, it admits of a most important interpretation; for it points out to us both the trials which he underwent in his life and death; and also his purity and constancy in those trials. In the days of his flesh, he was tried by all the vehemence of temptation, and all the weight of affliction; but he stood firm and unmoved under that which

would have sunk the whole creation; and thus manifested himself, upon trial, to be a stone fit to sustain the whole spiritual building of which he is the foundation: he came forth from the conflict with all the powers of earth and hell, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery test. Sustaining the character of a substitute, and acting as the representative of his people, his obedience was tried, and it appeared upon the trial, to be perfect and universal. His meekness was tried, by the contumely he met with from men—his patience and resignation to the divine will were put to the strongest test, when the bitter cup of the wrath of heaven against sin was put into his hands; but he drank it up to the very dregs, and as the Captain of salvation, he was perfected by his sufferings. His love to his heavenly Father and zeal for His honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, which glowed without languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men, to sinful men, who were his enemies, was tried, and that to the uttermost—but having loved his own, he loved them unto the end; and rather than they should perish by the sword of eternal justice, he suffered it to be plunged in his own heart's blood! He endured the cross, and despised the shame; and thus the severity of the trial only rendered his love to God and man the more illustrious, and evinced his fitness to become the foundation of his church.

3. He is an *elect* or *chosen* foundation-stone—"Chosen of God"—"his elect, in whom his soul delighteth,"—Isa. lxii. 1. The blessed God, who perfectly knew the nature and importance of the superstructure he was to raise, and what kind of foundation was necessary to support it, made choice of him in his own eternal counsels, as every way answerable for the purpose which Infinite Wisdom had in view. The Jewish builders, indeed, refused this foundation-stone; blinded by prejudice, and hardened through unbelief, they despised and

rejected Jesus, and to the great body of that nation, he proved to be a stumbling stone and rock of offence. But in this they only fulfilled their own Scriptures, and sealed their own condemnation. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold," saith Jehovah, "mine elect, in whom *my soul delighteth*: I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

4. He is a *precious* corner-stone. The New Jerusalem is described in the Apocalypse as founded upon twelve precious stones,—Rev. xxi. 19, 20; but it is from this stone that they derive all their preciousness—all their value, their lustre, and their virtue. Jesus Christ has no equal in personal worth and dignity. Reflect for a moment upon his real character. He is Emmanuel, God with us—in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—all divine excellencies centre in Him who is Jehovah's fellow. He has no equal in glory and resplendency, for he is the brightness of glory, and the ornament of the whole creation of God. Neither has he any equal in respect of beneficial and useful virtues; for all fulness dwells in him, all spiritual and eternal blessings are derived from him. Hence, he is the pearl of great price, and infinitely precious, or an honour, to all them that believe. He is, as described by the spouse in the Canticles, "altogether lovely."

5. He is a *sure* foundation. Every builder can tell us that the first and main property of a foundation, is to be firm and stable; and, for a very obvious reason—the strength, stability, and duration, of the whole building depend upon it. But that Jesus Christ is a sure foundation, is evident from this: that he is of divine appointment; for, "Behold," says Jehovah, "*I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.*" It is clear, therefore, from the *declaration* of God himself, who can neither deceive nor be mistaken. But it is manifest, also, from the *dignity of his person*; for, is He not the mighty God who created and upholds all things, and by whom all

things consist? And as there can be no defect on the score of power and might; so, neither, can there be any room to doubt the *good-will* of him, who gave himself for his church, and who now invites the very chief of sinners to come unto him, and put their whole trust in him. Of his good-will, he has given the most signal proofs, and, indeed, demonstrated that it is equal to his ability. He must, then, be a sure foundation. But, further—

6. Jesus Christ is the *alone* and *exclusive* foundation; for so the apostle declares in the words of my text: “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “This is the stone set at nought of the builders, which is become the head of the corner.” The apostle Peter, you know, quotes these words from Ps. cxviii. 22. and applies them to Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, and, having quoted them, observe how he proceeds. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,”—Acts iv. 12. He is indeed an Almighty Saviour: for, having expiated sin by the sacrifice of himself, he rose from the dead; and, as the reward of his sufferings, was vested with power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him to redeem. In vain, then, do sinners look for a ground of hope, to any other foundation than his finished work. By that, and by that alone, the guilt of sin was cancelled, and the claims of eternal justice fully satisfied; and, in that, Jehovah remains for ever well-pleased, for it has magnified the law, and made it honourable. Let us next enquire,—

II. By whom, and how, this foundation was laid. The apostle, indeed, says, “As a wise master-builder,” or skilful architect, “I have laid the foundation.” But this can be understood, only of his ministry, he being the first that preached the Gospel among the Corinthians,

according to Acts xviii. He laid the foundation of their faith, as well as the ground-work for succeeding teachers, in preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified, ch. ii. 2. and xv. 1—5. This he did, not of his own authority, or of his own ability, but, “according to the grace of God which was given unto him,” in other words, according to the apostolic mission, and the qualifications with which God had furnished him. The apostle, therefore, laid the foundation among the Corinthians, only in the way of doctrine, exhibiting Christ Jesus before them as the foundation already laid. But he who really and properly laid this foundation is the Lord God, in the person of the Father, as is demonstrable from—Isa. xxviii. 16. “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste;” or, as the apostle gives the sense of the latter clause, “shall not be ashamed,” or *confounded*,—Rom. ix. 33, *margin*. Jehovah claims the exclusive honour of laying this foundation; it was his own proper work. And the Psalmist, speaking of the Messiah as being made the head of the corner, acknowledges this: “This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes,”—Ps. cxviii. 23. He laid him as the foundation, in his purpose from all eternity, when he formed the model of the spiritual building in his own eternal mind. He set him forth as the foundation in all the predictions of the Old Testament, whereby he revealed his purpose beforehand; but, he actually began to lay him as the foundation—

1. *In the constitution of his person*, sending him forth, made of a woman—of the seed of David according to the flesh. Thus the WORD, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, was made flesh, or became incarnate. This was Emmanuel, God with us, or God manifest in the flesh: and thus he was made a fit foundation-stone, corresponding to the nature of the building which was to be reared upon him. “The children being

partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same."

2. The Lord laid him as the foundation of the church, in *his death*. While in this world, the Lord Jesus was in a humbled state, having no form or comeliness in the carnal eye, was but as a root out of a dry ground. Hence the Jews rejected, despised, and crucified him, because he claimed to be the Son of the Highest. Thus they stumbled at this stumbling-stone, and set him at nought as entirely unfit for the building. But, in all this, they only fulfilled the divine purpose, doing whatsoever God's hand and counsel had before determined should be done,—Acts iv. 28. And thus his death was an important step, by means of which the blessed God laid him as the foundation of the Christian church.

3. Another and, as I may say, the crowning step, whereby the Lord laid him as the foundation, consisted in his *resurrection* and *exaltation* to the Father's right-hand, and his being invested with all power, both in heaven and on earth. *Then*, indeed, it was in an especial manner that the stone which was set at nought of the Jewish builders, became the head of the corner,—Acts iv. 10, 11. Thus in his appointment, incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation, God hath laid his Son Jesus for a foundation in Zion. And when the apostles declared this to the world, by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, they also are said to lay this foundation, that being the means which Infinite Wisdom hath appointed for bringing men to the faith, and so leading them to build their hopes for eternity upon that sure basis; for, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We now come to consider,

III. The *superstructure* which is built upon this foundation; and this we shall find, upon looking into the subject, to be exceedingly grand and glorious, every way worthy of God, the great builder, "of all things," and becoming such a matchless foundation. To take in all

its dimensions, not only exceeds the power of description, but surpasses all finite comprehension. We can only advert to a few leading particulars. I observe, then,—

1. That Jesus Christ is the foundation *of all the counsels of God*, respecting the manifestation of his glory in the redemption of mankind. In all his works, God's chief end is the manifestation of his glory, or the display of the matchless excellencies of his perfections, such as his wisdom, power, and goodness; his mercy, love, and grace. In the work of redemption, he determined to manifest these in another and higher manner than he had done in the works of creation. In forming the wonderful plan, man was considered as a sinful, ruined creature; and divine mercy, and free and sovereign grace, were to be magnified in his redemption. But this was to be done consistently with a display of the divine justice and holiness. How these could unite with those, and all appear with equal lustre in the salvation of guilty rebels—this was the work of divine wisdom to contrive, and in so doing it is glorified. In this grand contrivance, Jesus Christ was laid as the foundation of the plan;—on him it rested, and, in him, all its parts unite in one consistent whole, so as most effectually to secure all the ends proposed; namely, the display of the divine glory in the redemption and salvation of a lost world. To evince the truth of what has now been stated, let the following things be well considered.

The Gospel, which is a revelation of the plan of redemption, and illustrates its accomplishment, declares that all the spiritual and eternal blessings which are conferred upon men,—such as their calling, the forgiveness of sins, adoption into the family of God, the sealing and earnest of the Spirit, and the heavenly inheritance,—are all bestowed in consequence of the divine purpose and grace given them in Christ Jesus before the world began,—Eph. i. 3—15.; 2 Tim. i. 9. Moreover, the Gospel declares that this eternal purpose was laid up in Christ



as the foundation of its accomplishment, and the grand medium through whom it was to take effect. So that believers are said to have been *chosen in Christ*—to have been predestinated unto the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ* to himself,—Eph. i. 4, 5,—and to be now actually saved and called according to his own purpose and grace, which, even before the creation, was given them in Christ Jesus,—2 Tim. i. 9. In short, the grand design of the whole is, that they should be to the praise of his glory;—Eph. i. 12; particularly to the praise of the glory of his grace, ver. 6; or, as the same apostle expresses it in another passage, “that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy,”—Rom. ix. 23,—that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus,—Eph. ii. 7. But

2. Not only is the Lord Jesus the foundation of all the counsels of God; he is also the foundation of *the whole church of the redeemed*. So he is said to be laid *in Zion*, or the true church, for a foundation. To enter a little into the import of this doctrine, it will be needful to remember, that the church of God is held forth in the Scriptures, under the metaphor of a city, a building, a temple, a spiritual house. Believers are represented as lively stones in that building, and Christ both as the *foundation* and *chief corner-stone* of it, and so giving stability, unity, order, glory, and beauty, to the whole superstructure. Now to illustrate this topic a little, be it observed,—

That, from this foundation, the church derives all its *stability* and strength. When Peter confessed him to be the CHRIST, the Son of the living God, Jesus said unto him, “Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”—Matt. xvi. 18. Though the militant part of it should appear as a bruised reed and smoking flax, yet, being founded upon this rock of ages, it will stand against all the assaults of men and devils: and even death itself shall not overthrow it, for Jesus has the keys of

death and the invisible world. This foundation, therefore, is the security of the church, amidst all her conflicts.

Moreover, the *union* and *communion* of the church, both with God and among its members, stand upon this foundation.

Its *union* with God is founded in this,—the divine and human natures, or that of God and ourselves, are wonderfully united in the person of the Son of God, our Emmanuel, who is the Word made flesh, God manifest in the flesh. This is the corner-stone which unites man with God; and the Spirit of Christ unites all the living stones to him as the head of the corner; so that they are all connected with him as the medium of their union with God, as Christ himself expressed it, when he thus addressed the Father: “I in them, and thou in me,”—John xvii. 23. But, further,—

Its *communion* with God is founded in this—all the discoveries which the church obtains of his glory, as the just God and the Saviour, are made in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God. All her access to God, and intercourse with Him, in the way of worship, are founded on his Son’s mediation, who is at the head of this worshipping assembly, as their atoning Priest and powerful Advocate with the Father. All the communication and enjoyment of the divine love is by the Spirit, the Comforter, which Jesus hath received, and which he communicates unto them, that the joy which he himself has in his Father’s love may be in them, and that their joy may be full.

3. Jesus Christ is the foundation of union among all the parts of this spiritual building.

Not only hath the blessed God reconciled all things to himself by Jesus Christ, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven, but he hath also made him the foundation and centre of union among all the parts of this grand society, both in heaven and on earth. This is the mystery of his will which he purposed in

himself, and which is now revealed in the Gospel, viz. "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him,"—Eph. i. 9, 10: *in heaven*, the angels and spirits of just men made perfect—*on earth*, Jews and Gentiles of all nations and conditions, and of both sexes—and *all*, both in heaven, and on earth, united into one society, or gathered together again in one head, IN CHRIST; the apostle repeats it, *even in him*; thereby impressing upon our attention the importance of the consideration, that Christ is the foundation and centre of union, the cornerstone that knits the whole together, and gives unity and order to every part of this grand assembly.

4. It is from this foundation that the church derives all its *glory* and *beauty*. Zion is spoken of, in scripture, as, "the perfection of beauty,"—Psalm l. 2. And the forty-fifth Psalm celebrates her praise as, "the King's daughter, who is all glorious within; whose clothing is of wrought gold—this is the Queen who stands at his right hand, in gold of Ophir, whose beauty he greatly delights in, ver. 9. 11, 13. But whence did the church derive this glory and beauty? From her connexion with this foundation, and not from any intrinsic excellencies of her own. "Arise, shine," says the prophet, "for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee: the Lord shall arise upon thee, and *his glory* shall be seen upon thee,"—Is. lx. 1, 2. Hear the same prophet once more: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion: put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city,"—ch. lii. 1. And what is the answer of Zion to all this? "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels,"—ch. lxi. 10. Do you ask what are these beautiful

ornaments; what these garments of salvation? You have a satisfactory reply furnished by the apostle Paul,—1 Cor. i. 30,—“Christ Jesus is made of God to us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” These are all the church needs in her present state; these blessings she enjoys in virtue of her connexion with her divine foundation; and while in this militant condition, she is encouraged to look forward to a higher state, in which her God shall be her glory,—Isa. lx. 19.

But as to the worship of the church while assembling in these earthly courts:—is there no apology to be made for this, as a drawback on the beauty and glory of Zion? A few poor despised followers of the Lamb,—in general, “unlearned and ignorant men,”—Acts iv. 13; *ignorant*, not of the Gospel, but of the *liberal sciences*, as they are termed—coming together on the first day of the week, to commemorate the dying love and rising power of Him who is the church’s foundation, not in a cathedral or any splendid edifice, but in all the simplicity of primitive Christianity, and in these days of refinement too—a company of self-condemned sinners, whose only hope is in the mercy of God, as manifested in the atonement,—assembling, statedly, to keep the ordinances as they were first delivered by the church’s Head—to observe the apostles’ doctrine and the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers; not because they are enjoined by Act of Parliament, but commanded by their Lord, and stamped with his authority. Shall we apologize for this? God forbid! Let the mother of harlots deck herself with meretricious ornaments, and hand round the golden cup of the wine of her fornication, wherewith to intoxicate the nations of this world; but, let it be our first concern to keep our garments clean, to partake not of her sins, that we receive not of her plagues. To strangers we say, “Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, con-

sider her palaces, in which God is known for a refuge, that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God, for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death,"—Psalm xliiii. 3, 12—15.

I close with a word of application—

Brethren, let each one of us ask himself, have I been led to see the vanity of every other foundation,—all the refuges of lies to which mankind, naturally, have recourse,—so as to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the Gospel? Have we been made sensible of the excellency, the preciousness, the stability, of this foundation, which God hath laid in Zion? If so, let us be daily coming to Christ, as unto a living stone, who, though disallowed of men, yet is chosen of God and precious; and may we all, as lively stones, be built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—Remember, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ,—that ye might be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of Him that hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. May he vouchsafe his blessing on what hath now been said.—  
AMEN.

Go worship at Immanuel's feet,  
See in his face what wonders meet!  
Earth is too narrow to express  
His worth, his glory, and his grace.

The whole creation can afford,  
But some faint shadows of my Lord:  
Nature, to make his beauties known,  
Must mingle colours not her own.

Is he design'd a *Corner-stone*,  
For men to build their hopes upon?  
I'll make him my foundation too,  
Nor fear the plots of hell below.

## SERMON X.

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### THE BELIEVER'S PERFECTION IN CHRIST.

*And ye are complete in Him, who is the Head of all Principality and Power.*

Col. ii. 10.

AN attentive reader of the apostolic writings cannot fail to perceive, that the spirit of error began to make its appearance very early in the churches of Christ. Even while the apostles were yet living, Antichrist began to show himself at work, corrupting the simple truth of the Gospel, and mingling the inventions of men with the precepts of Christ. There were two classes of false teachers which presently sprang up, troubling the churches, and subverting the souls of the disciples. The first were Jews by nature, or nation, who, though they acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah, yet did not perceive that, by means of his death upon the cross, he had abrogated the Levitical dispensation, and was become "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Preserving all their wonted attachment to the law of Moses, these men obtained access to the Gentile churches, and taught them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law, they could not be saved. The first intimation which we have of this heresy is in Acts xv, where we find, that a council was convened at Jerusalem, for the purpose of taking the subject into consideration, and the conclusion which the

apostles and elders came to, was to condemn the tenet as subversive of the true grace of God, and to draw up a charter of liberty for all the Gentiles. But no sooner was this point set at rest, than a fresh source of heresy sprang up from another quarter, and that was from among the Gentiles, or more properly, the Greek philosophers. These men seem to have admitted that the Gospel, so far as it went, was good enough; they were not for calling in question its doctrines, or setting aside its laws and institutions; nevertheless, they thought it was, as a whole, susceptible of great improvement, by means of a few touches from their favourite systems of philosophy. The doctrine of Jesus Christ and him crucified, as preached by Paul and his associates, appeared a very bald and meager affair, somewhat revolting to their refined and classical taste, and therefore they wished to give it a little polish.

Now, if you examine the connexion in which the text stands, you will find reason to think, that the apostle has an eye to both these classes of corrupt teachers, and that he is warning the disciples at Colosse against them. "Beware," says he, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power."

The words of the text naturally divide themselves into two parts, viz.—The Character of the person spoken of;—and the Completeness which his disciples possess in Him. Let us attend to each of these in order.

I. The person spoken of is evidently "Christ Jesus the Lord," as in ver. 6, in whom he affirms, that "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily,"—ver. 9. Of his character, his work, and his glory, he has treated so fully in the former part of the epistle, that it will be unnecessary for me to do more, on the present occa-

sion, than to point you to what the apostle has there said of him. In the preceding chapter, ver. 14, he speaks of him as "God's dear Son," or the Son of his love, as in the *margin*. It is indeed true, that the title, "Son of God," is sometimes applied in scripture to others, besides the person here mentioned. Angels are termed the sons of God,—Job. xxxviii. 7, to denote their eminence as the most distinguished of created beings. Adam is termed the "son of God,"—Luke iii. 38, as standing at the head of the human race, created by the immediate hand of God, and not coming into the world after the ordinary course of generation. Believers in Christ are termed the "sons of God," because they are "*adopted*" into his family, and made heirs of the heavenly inheritance,—Rom. viii. 14; Gal. iv. 6; 1 John iii. 1. But when Jesus is termed God's dear Son, or the beloved Son of God, it imports something different from its use in any of the passages now cited. Of this you may be satisfied by attending to the apostle's discourse in Heb. i. where he contrasts the person spoken of in my text, with both angels and men, and shows his infinite superiority to each. God, who of old spake by the prophets, hath now spoken by his Son, the appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; to which of the angels said he, at any time, thou art my Son?—but unto THE SON he saith, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,"—ver. 1, 5, 8. He is "that holy thing" which was conceived in the virgin's womb by "the power of the Highest," and "therefore called the Son of God,"—Luke i. 35. For he was "God manifest in the flesh," "Immanuel, God with us,"—the divine Word, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, the framer of all things, tabernacling in human nature,—John i. 1, 3, 14. This is the person referred to in my text, and whom the apostle denominates God's "*dear Son.*"

He further says of him, ver. 14, "Who is the *image of the invisible God.*" We all know that the self-existent Jehovah is invisible to mortals; for, "no man hath seen God at any time." He dwells in light which is



inaccessible. He is the "King eternal, immortal, invisible." When Moses petitioned to be favoured with a sight of His glory, he received for answer, "thou canst not see my face and live." He ceased, however, to be wholly in every sense invisible, when the Son of his love pitched his tent among men; for though God is a Spirit, and the divine essence cannot be beheld, yet every perfection of Deity was manifested to mortals in the man Christ Jesus; he being "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," or character,—Heb. i. 3. Hence his apostles could say, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,—John i. 14. And hence the saying of Jesus himself to his apostles: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father,—ch. xiv. 9.

"By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him,"—Col. i. 16. Language cannot possibly set forth his true, essential, un-originated Deity, in plainer terms than these. If all things were created by him, he must be God, the living and true God; "the mighty God," though "a child born and Son given," according to—Isa. ix. 6; and "who is over all God blessed for ever,"—Rom. ix. 5. Angels and archangels, the highest order of created intelligences, owe their existence unto him. All things in heaven, and all things here below, derive their being from him; they are the workmanship of his almighty power, and were created to display his glory. He must therefore be the eternal God, for "He is before all things, and by him all things consist,"—ver. 17. The apostle appears to labour to set forth the eternity of this divine person, and shew that he existed before any *creatures* were called into being. And so in—Heb. i. we find him quoting, from the forty-fifth Psalm, a remarkable address of the divine Father to the Son of his love, which runs thus: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth,

and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest," &c.—ver. 10, 11. He is not only the Creator, but the sustainer of all things, for "by him all things consist." He "upholds all things by the word of his power,"—ver. 3. At the first, he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast; and now, all nature rests upon his arm! Such is the original dignity of the person to whom my text refers.

Let us now attend to what the apostle says respecting another part of his character—his wondrous condescension and grace. On this subject he tells us, that "having made peace through the blood of his cross," he had reconciled enemies, "*in, or by, the body of his flesh through death,*"—Col. i. 20,—22, with which we may connect ver. 14,—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Here the apostle calls our attention to the ends of his incarnation, his assumption of human nature into personal union with the divine—his manifestation in the flesh—and the object of his mission into the world, which was to save sinners,—by giving his life a ransom for many. Observe how the apostle states this matter, in Phil. ii. 6—8. As the good Shepherd, Jesus laid down his life for the sheep; his blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many, and "he made peace by the blood of his cross," or his blood shed upon the cross; and thus, by means of that death which he underwent in his "natural body," he made reconciliation for the sins of his people; the consequence is, that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." His death was an adequate compensation to divine justice for the injury done to the divine law; for his blood was of infinite value, and shed by eternal decree for the remission of sins; and God, in raising him from the dead, has given us the highest possible proof of his perfect satisfaction in it as the ransom price of man's redemption; and the truth of all this will appear, if we consider what the

apostle further says concerning the reward of his sufferings and death,—ver. 18.

“He is the Head of the body, the church; the beginning,” or chief,—“the first-born from the dead; that in all things, or among all, he might have the pre-eminence.” It was for the church that Christ died: for “he loved the church and gave himself for it.” The church is his “purchased possession,” and HE is its Head and Saviour,—Eph. v. 23—25. He is the first-born, or first-begotten, from the dead; the beginning or chief of the new creation; which imports that the Lord of life and glory was in the state of the dead—that he was the first to rise from the dead, to inherit immortality,—and that to Him, as *first-born*, belong the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, having the pre-eminence among all his brethren,—Gen. xlix. 3. Moreover,—

“It pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell,”—ver. 19. The state of the disciples of Christ, while in this world, is one of extreme indigence and dependence—they are, in themselves, “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” though, unhappily, they too often overlook the humbling fact, and fancy themselves rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing,—Rev. iii. 17. Now the wisdom of God hath made ample provision for this, by constituting God’s beloved Son, the head of his body, the church; and so ordering it, that a FULNESS should be treasured up in Him, answerable to all the exigencies of his members. This is so important a subject to us all, and so replete with consolation, that we must dwell a little upon it.

1. The *fulness* which it hath pleased the Father to treasure up in Christ, as head of his body, the church, includes a plenitude, or perfection, of *righteousness*, amply sufficient to justify the ungodly, or to procure the pardon and acceptance of all who believe in him, as the true Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. As the substitute of his guilty people, he undertook to fulfil all righteousness in their behalf; and

in his obedience unto death, he honoured the divine law to the uttermost, exhibiting the perfection of love to God and man. He obeyed all its precepts, answered all its requirements, suffered its awful penalties, bearing the curse which was due to transgressors, and is now "the end of it for righteousness, or justification, to every one that believeth." In him the church boasts, as the "LORD her righteousness,"—Jer. xxiii. 6. Under all the consciousness of their own guilt and deficiency, every one of his people can exult and say: "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength,"—Isa. xlv. 24.

2. The fulness which is treasured up in Christ includes also a fulness of *dignity and worth*; for every divine excellency and perfection is HIS, who humbled himself to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He is "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,"—Song v. 10, 16. While he tabernacled among us, he was "full of grace and full of truth." Not only was grace "poured into his lips," sweetly seasoning all his discourse, but his whole conduct and deportment, while he tabernacled below, displayed his honour, dignity, and worth. Commissioned as God's "righteous servant" to reveal his name and execute his pleasure, in the way of obedience and suffering, the Father had the highest delight in all he did and said—in the honours which he rendered to the divine law, and the glory which he manifested in the divine perfections—and for all this he loved him, and rewarded him, not only by raising him from the dead, and seating him at his own right hand in the heavens, but by constituting him his Almoner—the dispenser of his favours—the channel through which all the blessings of grace and salvation flow to the children of men. His infinite worth and excellence is the perpetual theme of boast and exultation to the glorified spirits above, who incessantly chant before the throne, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." But,—

3. The fulness, which it hath pleased the Father

should dwell in the Son of his love, includes also *the Holy Spirit*. For when he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, he received all the fulness of the Spirit, which is by him communicated to the various members of his mystical body, dividing to every man severally as he will—the Spirit of grace and supplication—of wisdom and revelation—of peace and hope, of consolation and joy—the Spirit of holiness, and all other gifts. The fulness of the Spirit dwells in him, as Head of his body the church, and it is in his power to bestow it as her necessities may require.

4. All the *fulness of the Godhead* dwells in him bodily, or as vested with humanity, that is, as Mediator,—ver. 9. All the perfections of Deity belong to our Redeemer—wisdom, power, and love,—mercy, truth, and grace—riches, glory, and blessing—might, majesty, and dominion. He is the “true God, and eternal life”—possessed of all power and authority, both in heaven and on earth—power to raise the dead and judge the world—to punish his enemies, and reward his servants—in short, according to the words of my text, he is the *head of all principality and power*—all the angelic host are put in subjection unto Him—they are all his ministering servants, and they worship Him as one with his divine Father, in eternal and inseparable union,—John x. 30; xvii, 5, 21; Heb. i. 6; Rev. v. 12, 13.

I have thus attempted a brief illustration of the first branch of our subject—the character of the person spoken of in the text—God's beloved Son—the image of the invisible God—the Creator of the heavens and the earth—the Saviour of a lost world—the source of our redemption—the first-begotten from the dead—the Head of his body the church, in whom it hath pleased the Father that “ALL FULNESS” should dwell—a fulness every way answerable to the exigencies of his people, so as to warrant the apostle in affirming, as he does, “*Ye are complete in Him.*” Which leads us to enquire,—

II. In what does this Completeness, or Perfection, consist?

The world has rung of late years with the strange and extravagant doctrine of human perfectibility,—that is, that persons may attain to a state of sinless perfection in the present life; and many professors of religion have actually laid claim to it. I do not mean to deny, that the writers of the New Testament sometimes speak of *perfection*,—they set it before the disciples of Christ as an object which they ought to press after,—they exhort to it, and furnish motives and encouragements to perform the duty; but to contend, that they admit the possibility of attaining to a state of sinless perfection in this life, is to make them contradict themselves, or one another. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Such is the declaration of the apostle John. “In many things we all offend,” says James. “I find a law,” says Paul, “that when I would do good, evil is present with me. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” These testimonies are not easily gainsayed; but to weaken their force, the ground has been changed, and we are now told, that it is not perfection in holiness that is pleaded for, but *perfection in love*. For my own part, I am at a loss to perceive, what is gained by this evasion. I observe an apostle saying, that, “Love is the fulfilling of the law,” and the law—which is the sum of all holiness,—is summed up by Christ himself, in perfect love to God and our neighbour; on which the same apostle remarks, “He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law,” toward him. So that, according to apostolic teaching, it comes to the same thing; for he that is perfect in love, is perfect in holiness! To avoid this difficulty, others have thought it best to drop all mention of sinless perfection, and even of being perfect in love, and to speak of *Christian perfection*. This is the ground, I believe, on which the Arminians of the

present day prefer taking their stand, and we must admire their prudence and dexterity in so doing. The expression is of much more vague and ambiguous import, it is not a strictly scriptural phrase, and it admits a greater latitude of interpretation. Let us not, however, be imposed upon by the sound of words. The Christian character is never found *perfect* in any of the followers of Christ in this imperfect state. Even Paul himself disclaimed all such pretensions: "Not as though I had already attained," says he, "either were already perfect, but I pursue, or follow after," that high object. He had not attained perfection either in the knowledge of divine things, or in obedience to the divine will. It is true that he was favoured with a deep insight into "the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ," but he pressed after more of this knowledge. He fell practically under the influence of divine truth, but his obedience was still imperfect; and forgetting the things that were behind, he reached forth unto those that were before him, pressing towards the mark. But does not the apostle say, in Col. i. 28, "that he taught every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus?" and does he not also in our text, speak of the Colossians as being *complete in him*? Unquestionably he does: but then, to be perfect in themselves, or their own characters—and to be perfect, or to have all their deficiencies filled up, in another, viz. Christ, are not precisely the same thing, as I shall now briefly attempt to show.

To explain what I understand to be the apostle's meaning in the text, it seems to me, we cannot do better than allow him to be his own interpreter, when treating of the same subject in another place, viz.—1 Cor. i. 30; "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Here the apostle has stated, in few words, the sum of the benefits and blessings which the disciples of

Christ derive through his mediation, and enjoy in virtue of their connexion with Him as the head of his mystical body. Let us consider each in its order.

1. He is made unto them—*Wisdom*. This has a reference to his prophetic office; for he came “a light into this world, that whosoever believeth in him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life,”—John viii. 12; xii. 46. Every reflecting mind must admit, that very much of the misery of mankind arises from that darkness and ignorance to which we are all naturally subjected by the fall. What an awful picture does the apostle draw of the state of the Gentile nations, in Rom. i; and Eph. iv. 18, 19; where he describes them as “having the understanding darkened through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart,” &c. Not only were they ignorant of the character of the true God, but they were alike ignorant of their own real state, as fallen, depraved, helpless, undone beings; consequently their hearts were in a state of alienation from him. A secret consciousness of guilt made them fear and treat him as an implacable enemy, and they retired as far off from his worship and service as possible. But Jesus came “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel,”—Luke ii. 32. He came to “give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace,”—Luke i. 79. His very mission poured a flood of light on the state of this benighted world; and while it necessarily involved in it the fact, of its fallen, guilty, and ruined condition, it exhibited the highest possible proof of the divine philanthropy, or good will to men. “God so loved the world, as to give his Son; not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” Jesus was anointed “to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that were bruised, to preach the



acceptable year of the Lord,"—Luke iv. 18, 19. In this way he discharged the duties of his prophetic office, revealed his Father's name, unfolded his eternal purposes of grace and salvation, and was made of God unto us—*Wisdom*.

2. He is, by a gracious divine constitution, made unto us—*Righteousness*, or the medium of our justification. This appertains to his office as the great High Priest of his church. We are all, by nature, the subjects of sin, and under the condemning sentence of the divine law, exposed to wrath and misery. The beloved Son of God, as the substitute of his guilty people, undertook to fulfil all righteousness; with a view to which, he was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under it, that we might obtain deliverance from its condemning sentence, have our sins forgiven, and be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. In his obedience unto death, the utmost requirements of the divine law were answered on behalf of his people for whom he died; so that justice requires no more, and believing sinners are justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He is, consequently, "Jehovah their righteousness," and in him his church boasts as having—righteousness and strength,—Isa. xlv. In all their approaches to God, and under the deepest impression of their own guilt and unworthiness, they make mention of his righteousness, and that only, pleading its perfection, and confident of its efficacy; for it is unto and upon all that believe, without difference.

3. Another important blessing which believers enjoy through Christ, and which is essential to their completeness, is that of *Sanctification*, or deliverance from the guilt, the power, and the love of sin. There are, indeed, two distinct views given us of sanctification in the New Testament, and from confounding these, many teachers of religion greatly perplex the minds of their

hearers. Sanctification is sometimes spoken of in a *fœderal* sense, by which is meant, the consecration of the elect unto God as his peculiar people, which was effected by the shedding of the blood of Christ for their redemption. It is in reference to this that the Saviour said: "For their sakes I *sanctify myself*, that they also might be sanctified through the truth,"—John xvii. 19. And again, it is written: "Both he that *sanctifieth* and they who are sanctified are all of one,"—Heb. ii. 11. And again, chapter xiii. 12, "Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might *sanctify the people with his own blood*, suffered without the gate." This is the economical or covenant sense of the term sanctification. But it is more generally spoken of in a *moral* sense, as relating to the destruction of the *power* of sin in believers, and this is effected by the influence of his word and Spirit, renewing them in the spirit of their minds, writing his law in their hearts, and conforming them to his image. This is what neither the law of Moses could effect for the Jew, nor the philosophy of the schools for the wise Greek; though both of them might enjoy it through faith in Christ.

4. He is made of God unto us—*Redemption*; not only by *price*, as having paid the ransom, and so bought his people off from the condemning sentence of the divine law, and their obligation to punishment; but also by *power*, delivering them from the slavery and dominion of all their enemies—the world, the flesh, and the wicked one—from all iniquity, and from the wrath to come. This appertains to his kingly office, but the redemption here spoken of includes more than even this; it imports the final redemption of the bodies of his people from death and the grave—for Jesus is the resurrection and the life,—John xi. 25; the church is his purchased possession,—Eph. i. 14; and he puts his seal upon them, marking them as his own special property until the day of redemption, when he will raise their bodies from the grave, and give them eter-

nal life and glory with himself, in his eternal kingdom. As this will consummate the blessedness of the heirs of salvation, so will it perfect that completeness of which the apostle speaks in my text—and all this comes to them through Christ, and is enjoyed in virtue of their connexion with him, their risen, exalted, and glorified Head.

What, then, is the improvement we should make of the subject which we have been considering? It surely comes powerfully recommended to the attention of various classes of persons:—among these are—

1. *Open unbelievers*, and such as think little of Christ in the all-important concerns of salvation. This is, unhappily, a very numerous class, and includes various subdivisions. There is the man of pleasure, the gay voluptuary, whose cry is, “What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed,”—“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” In other words, let us make the most of life while we have it—and let futurity care for itself. To them it is nothing, that heaven hath provided redemption for a lost and perishing world—that God so loved the world as to send his Son to die for the salvation of sinful mortals—that the Gospel publishes his mission, with the ends of it, and invites all to partake of the blessings which he hath provided, and that without money and without price. But let such hearken to the voice which now addresses them from heaven: “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for I work a work in your day—a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

2. This subject speaks no less loudly to *the Pharisee*, to such as, though they do not professedly reject Christ and his Gospel, are yet for halving matters with him, and making use of his righteousness merely to help out their own in the matter of their salvation. It is evident that the apostles went upon a totally different plan of doctrine. They exhibited Christ, in their preaching, as

an Almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, whose work was at once complete and perfect, meeting the sinner's necessities in every direction—as having made peace by the blood of his cross, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, every way answerable to the requirements of the divine law, and which righteousness is “unto and upon all that believe, without difference.” In this way they provided for the honours of grace—the glory of God in the salvation of the guilty—by showing “Christ to be all in all,” and leading the minds of men to the fulness which is treasured up in him.” Selfrighteousness is a very subtle thing; the spirit of it cleaves close to us all, and it must be mortified daily and hourly, if we would live by the faith of the Son of God. Happy would it be, if all professed Christians were of the mind of the apostle Paul when he said: “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”—Phil. iii. 8, 9.

3. The doctrine of the apostle, in the passage before us, evidently suggests an important lesson to the disciples of Christ in every age and country, to beware of a perverted Gospel, and exercise a becoming jealousy about what they hear respecting a sinner's acceptance with God. In this respect, the conduct of the holy apostles formed a striking contrast to that of the great bulk of professors in our day. With us, almost any thing will do for evangelical preaching, in which the name of Christ, and the terms grace and faith and righteousness, &c., are plentifully interlarded, even though the meaning affixed to these terms be very different from what the apostles intended by them. Whereas, if we carefully attend to the Scriptures, we cannot fail to be struck with the numerous cautions that are given us by the Holy Spirit to use our utmost vigilance that we be not deceived by false teachers in a matter of such vast moment.—What, for instance, can be more pointed than the fol-

lowing admonitions: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—"Believe not every spirit," that is, every doctrine, "but try the spirits, whether they are of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world."—"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you unto one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." And then the apostle proceeds to speak of persons preaching another Gospel,—and terms them "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,"—2 Cor. xi. And observe what he says to the Galatians, chap. i. 6—9.—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again; if any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Such was the jealousy of Paul for the purity and simplicity of the Gospel of divine grace—the form of sound words—"the faith once delivered to the saints,"—and hence the caution which he gives the Colosians, in this place: "Beware, then, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." These inspired guides would neither admit the Jewish rite of circumcision to be added to the finished work of Christ as the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, nor yet any improvements from the Gentile systems of philosophy, to render the Gospel more palatable to unbelievers; in fact, every attempt of this kind, whether it were to add to or detract from the bare truth concerning Jesus Christ and him crucified, always alarmed

their jealousy for the honour of divine grace. Hence the apostle Paul's deprecation: "I would they were cut off that trouble you!" Let us, my brethren, take a lesson from this; for, the spirit of error is quite as busily at work in our day as it ever was in those of the apostles'.

4. And, to conclude; the subject admits of a direct, and personal, and powerful application to all the genuine disciples of the Saviour. "AS ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, SO *walk ye in him.*" Call to mind the deep, and humbling, and self-abasing views under which you first received him, when you were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, when the Gospel first addressed you, speaking peace to your guilty consciences—and call to mind the glorious and exalted views which you then had of the person, character, and work, of your God and Saviour; when his name was to you as the choicest perfume to the senses—when he appeared to you to be altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand. Cultivate, I say, these views and impressions, and never, for one moment, imagine that you stand less in need of Christ than you then did. It was the misfortune of the church at Laodicea to have lost sight of their own guilty characters—their lost and undone state—their daily need of pardoning mercy, and atoning blood: they fancied themselves to be rich, and increased in goods, and to have less need of the Saviour than they had formerly—and this error led to a wretched state of lukewarmness and indifference. Avoiding, then, all such dangerous errors, cultivate the lowliest views of yourselves, and you will walk humbly, safely, honourably, and triumphantly,—you will have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. AMEN.

## SERMON XI.

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### CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Col. iii. 11.

THE distinctions of nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue, which during a long succession of ages have taken place in the great family of mankind, are some of the most curious subjects of speculation that can engage the human mind. I would not, however, be understood to mean, that they are merely matters of speculation; on the contrary, were we to examine them narrowly, we could not fail to perceive in them the finger of God, and that he has made them, in various ways, subservient to his own glory, and the manifestation of his wise and holy providence in the government of the world.

MOSES, the oldest and certainly the most authentic historian that ever wrote on the origin of nations, informs us, that all the various tribes that people this earth, sprang, originally, from one pair; and that when, for the wickedness of man, God had destroyed the earth by water, it was re-peopled by a single family. We have the history of this in the tenth chapter of Genesis, which gives us the division of the earth between the three sons of Noah, and thus compendiously sums up the matter:—"These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their na-

tions; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood,"—ver. 32.

At first, the whole earth was of one language and of one speech; but when four or five centuries had elapsed, from the period of the deluge, one of the most important distinctions that ever took place among mankind, was introduced expressly by divine appointment. It was occasioned by the calling of Abraham, and giving him the covenant of circumcision. This memorable event paved the way for the distinction between Jew and Gentile—between the circumcision and the uncircumcision, of which we read so much in the Holy Scriptures, and to which my text particularly refers. This distinction subsisted in full force for fifteen hundred years; but having answered the purposes of divine Wisdom in giving birth to the Messiah, much of its importance then virtually ceased. It is necessary, however, to keep these things in mind, if we would enter into the full import of many parts of the apostolic writings.

It appears from various things contained in the New Testament, that the first churches were greatly troubled by a class of Jewish teachers, who were for introducing these *national*, and adventitious distinctions into the kingdom or church of Christ; but this the apostle Paul opposed with all his might on every fit occasion. In the kingdoms of this world, these distinctions had long obtained, and they had their use; and even in the kingdom of David, which was a theocracy, they were important; but under the dispensation of the Messiah, the Gospel economy, which is a kingdom *not of this world*, the case is far otherwise; for here, the blessed God pays no regard to persons on account of their carnal descent, their rank and station in society, or their sex; on the contrary, all who believe in Christ, and so are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created them—all who receive him as the great Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church, own him as



their Lord and Saviour, and obey his will,—are equally admissible to the privileges of the Gospel, equally in favour with God, and equal in respect of dignity; for they are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Now this, brethren, is the doctrine which the apostle is inculcating upon the Colossians in the words of my text. “Where” (that is, in a renewed state,) says he, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Seythian, bond nor free: but *Christ is all, and in all.*”

There are different views taken of the apostle’s meaning in the words “Christ is *all* and *in all.*” He had in chap. i. 18, spoken of Christ as the head of his body, the church, adding, “for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all *fulness* dwell;” and in chap. ii. 10, he tells them, “ye are *complete* in him;” as much as to say, you have every thing in him that you need in this mortal and imperfect state; for, by a gracious divine constitution, he is made of God unto all who believe, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; so that he is ALL in all *things*, in every part of your salvation—a Prophet to instruct and teach—a Priest to atone and bless—and a King to rule and protect his people: thus He is all, and in all.

The peculiar phraseology of the text renders it capable of an extended application to all the principles of divine truth, and to all the peculiarities of Christian experience. It is one of those compendious and comprehensive passages which, without disregarding or violating the precise import of its primary connexion, may be justly associated with every other portion of Christian doctrine: Christ is the source of our life—the ground of our hope—the solace of our spirits—our Light in darkness—our refuge from the storm—our hiding place from every tempest—the Star of mercy to shine on our path in the night of affliction—and the Sun of Righteousness to constitute the day-light of our felicity:—he is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever. Thus he is *all in all*, in the eternal purpose of

grace, in the successive dispensations of religion—in the types, shadows, and services of the law, and in the predictions of the prophets—in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, and in the whole work of our redemption. And while he is “*all*,” he is “*in all*,” of every name, and every age, and every class, and every nation, amidst all the possible diversities of individual and national character, and in all the successive periods of time: he is *in all*, for, in his kingdom, there is “neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.”

This doctrine I shall now attempt to illustrate in a few leading propositions.

I. The apostle’s declaration will hold good if we apply it to the *Divine Counsels*, to God’s eternal purpose respecting the redemption of mankind.

I am well aware that it behoves us to speak with great modesty and diffidence on a subject of this kind. We can know nothing of those eternal counsels but from revelation. The information, however, which the Scriptures *do* communicate, it is our duty reverently and submissively to receive, and diligently to consider. And what do we learn from them? Is it not this, in few words: that the blessed God, whose ultimate end in all his works is the manifestation of his own glory, foreseeing that man whom he was about to create would fall into sin, and entail ruin upon himself and his posterity, determined to glorify his perfections by rescuing an innumerable multitude of them from the effects of the fall, and conferring upon them the blessings of salvation. In this grand plan of Redemption, he purposed to display his glory in quite another way than that in which he had displayed it in the work of Creation. In the latter he had signally manifested his wisdom, power, and goodness; but in redemption, divine mercy, disinterested love, and sovereign grace were to be brought prominently forward; yet all this was to be done in perfect consistency with his holiness and justice;

the honours of the divine law were to be maintained inviolate, and no disparagement to arise to the moral Governor of the world, while dispensing the blessings of his grace to the sons of guilt and wretchedness.

Now, in this divine scheme, the result of infinite wisdom, "Christ is all, and in all." He was chosen in the divine counsels to the office of Mediator, and laid as the foundation of the whole plan of redemption; on him it rested, and in him all its parts unite in one consistent whole, so as most effectually to answer all the purposes of the Eternal Mind. In proof of what has now been said, I will quote a few texts of scripture. Thus, Isa. xlii. 1,—“Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” 2 Tim. i. 9,—“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.” 1 Pet. i. 18—20.—“Ye were not redeemed with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, or spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,” &c. But the most full and particular account which we have in all the Scriptures of the subject under consideration—the purposes of eternal mercy towards a perishing world,—is contained in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, ver. 3—11, where we see the apostle tracing the various steps of divine grace from the very fountain head, the self-moved, good pleasure of God in choosing, predestinating, redeeming, adopting, and finally conferring eternal glory on guilty rebels, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and in virtue of their connexion with him. All the heirs of salvation were chosen in him—to him they were given to be redeemed—through his blood they have the forgiveness of sins—and are adopted into the family of God—and through him they will finally obtain the eternal

inheritance. In the whole of this grand economy of divine grace, "Christ is all, and in all."

II. Christ is "all in all" in the predictions of the *inspired prophets*; and the ultimate end and scope of all the *typical dispensation*.

Immediately after the entrance of sin into the world, a ray of hope dawned upon our first parents, in an intimation which was given by their offended Sovereign, that the woman should have *a seed*; and that this seed should bruise the serpent's head,—Gen. iii. 15. Obscure as this intimation was, it relieved them from despair, and led them to hope in the divine mercy. It reclaimed their wanderings from God, and brought them back, as weeping suppliants, to his footstool. But when God entered into covenant with Abraham, additional light was thrown upon that first promise; it was renewed to him, and he was told, that in *his seed*, all the families of the earth should be blessed,—Gen. xii. 3, 18; and xviii. 18. We know, from the apostolic interpretation of these things, that the seed thus promised was Christ; that he was to descend through the loins of Isaac,—Gen. xxi. 12,—that he was to be the issue of Jacob, not of Esau; and that as the former had twelve sons, this promised seed was to come of the tribe of Judah, and of the lineage of David, with whom the Most High established a covenant of royalty,—2 Sam. vii. 12—17; chap. xxiii. 25. In the times of David, the scene of prophecy opened with a clearer and more majestic view. The son of Jesse was himself a prophet, and foretold the change of the order of the priesthood by the Messiah; he predicted the offices he should sustain; the sufferings he should undergo; and the glorious triumphs he should enjoy in his resurrection, ascension, and the extensive propagation of his Gospel,—Psalm ii; and xxii; and lxxii; and cx. And though I should hesitate to say with some, that Christ is the theme of *every one* of the

Psalms of David, yet I can freely admit, that his person, character, kingdom, and grace, constitute the leading topic in a great majority of them. From this period, the writings of the prophets are full of Christ and his salvation. In reading the writings of Isaiah, he appears at times more in the light of an historian, relating past occurrences, than of a prophet, foretelling things to come. So, indeed, it is with many of the succeeding prophets, all of whom "testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,"—1 Pet. i. 12; thus justifying the truth of that declaration, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." But he is also the scope, the end, the design, and the substance of the various types and prefigurations of the Levitical dispensation. The order of mortal priests, the sacrifices of slain beasts, the offerings of various kinds, the temple, the altar, the incense, and other "carnal ordinances" of the "worldly sanctuary," all pointed to him, and in him found their accomplishment,—Heb. ix. x.

### III. Christ is the one great and leading theme *in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles.*

Examine the former, and you will find that they have all one leading subject, namely, the personal history of their divine Master. They tell us of his original dignity as the eternal Word—the almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth—of angels and men—and of all the various tribes of inferior animals; they speak of his incarnation, or manifestation in the flesh, through his miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin, where a body was prepared for him by the Holy Spirit; they narrate the place and circumstances of his birth, and in these things we see fulfilled the predictions of the ancient prophets concerning the Messiah. We have also in their narratives an account of the doctrine which he taught, during the three years of his public ministry, as the great Prophet of the church, revealing his Father's name, and opening up his eternal purposes of grace and salva-

tion towards a lost world, with the ends of his own mission, and the work assigned him in the economy of redemption—we have a particular account of the wonderful works which he wrought in confirmation of his divine mission and doctrine, and of the treatment he received from the Jews, who set at nought all his claims to be the Messiah, and in their malice and rage, by wicked hands, took and crucified the Lord of Glory—his crucifixion, death, and burial, are likewise circumstantially related, as are also his resurrection from the dead on the third day, and his ascension into heaven, where he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having fully effected the ends of his mission into the world.

The Book of Acts is a connecting link between the histories of Jesus, and the apostolical epistles. It treats of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, by means of the preaching of his apostles and evangelists, and presents us with an outline of several of the sermons of our Lord's ambassadors, in every one of which we find Him to be "all in all." The main thing, however, that they dwell upon is, his resurrection from the dead, which they uniformly hold forth as the great proof of his Messiahship, and of the divine complacency resting in his work. But if we proceed to the apostolic epistles to the churches, what an inexhaustible storehouse of Christian doctrine have we in them. As Jesus Christ and him crucified was the first and last thing in their preaching, so we find it to be in their writings. They dwell with rapture upon his personal dignity and glory—his wondrous grace and condescension—his love towards sinners in giving himself for them, to ransom them from guilt and impending destruction—the blessings he has procured for them through his death and mediation—and the kingdom which he has thus purchased for them that love him:—which leads me to observe—

IV. That Christ is "all in all," *in the Salvation of sinners.* To accomplish this was the great object of his

mission into our world, as he himself repeatedly declared during his personal ministry: "I came down from heaven," said he, "not to do mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me, and to finish his work." He came in the character of the good Shepherd, to lay down his life for the sheep,—John x. He declares that he had received a commandment from his heavenly Father to that effect; and to this command he willingly became obedient. He came to seek and save that which was lost, and to give his life a ransom for many. His death was the procuring cause of our redemption; for he died for our sins, according to the Scriptures—he gave himself for us, as a voluntary sacrifice to the law and justice of God—his blood, which was of infinite value, (for it was the blood, not of a mere mortal like ourselves, but of the Son of God,) was shed, by covenant, for the remission of the sins of many, and by it the great atonement was made. His holy soul was made an offering for sin—it pleased the Father to bruise him and put him to grief: so that he bare the sins of his people in his own body on the tree—bare the punishment due unto them—on their account it was exacted of him, and he was made answerable,—Isa. liii. 7. The great moral Governor of the universe commanded the sword of eternal justice to awake and smite the Shepherd, in order that the sheep might go free,—Zech. xiii. 7; and thus was Messiah cut off, but not for himself,—Dan. ix. 24; it being for the transgression of God's people he was stricken or smitten to death, according to prophetic testimony,—Isa. liii. 8. But what say the Scriptures as to the grand result—the effects produced by all this? Why, we are told, that when the divine Substitute bowed his head upon the cross, yielding his Spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, he cried with a loud voice:—"IT IS FINISHED." This, however, was the shout of triumph over all the powers of earth and hell! His sufferings were indeed terminated, and dreadful they had been, as we may easily collect from the accounts fur-

nished by the evangelists of what transpired in the garden of Gethsemane, and in all the subsequent narrative. These things shew us his conflict with the enemies of his people, the powers of darkness, and the hidings of his Father's countenance:—but the cry, "*It is finished,*" was a declaration that the battle was fought and the victory won—that the law, sin, death, and hell were now vanquished—that peace was made by the blood of his cross—heaven and earth reconciled—and eternal redemption effected. In all this amazing work of obedience and suffering, Jesus stood alone—he had no associate, no coadjutor; under the most trying circumstances in which it was possible to be placed, all his disciples forsook him and fled. "For thy sake," said he in ancient prophecy, "I have borne reproach, shame hath covered my face; I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children,—Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none,—Psalm lxi. 7, 8, 20. The cup of the divine indignation against sin was given unto him, and he drank it up even to the very dregs; so that the whole honour of man's salvation belongs to him—he has no rival in the work of redemption—and with great propriety, all the redeemed company—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, are represented as saying, with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

V. Christ is "all in all," *in the Divine Promises.*

Many of the promises of God, which are interspersed throughout the Old Testament, had an immediate and pointed respect to the coming of the Messiah, the Desire of all nations and his manifestation in the flesh. These are all now accomplished in the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The day-spring from on high hath visited us—the salvation of Israel



hath come out of Zion. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under it:" and he hath thus vindicated his power and faithfulness, and shewn himself to be a God that keepeth covenant for ever. But in the New Covenant there are many exceeding great and precious promises, which are continually fulfilling to the heirs of salvation:—such is the great Gospel-promise:—"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved;"—to which I may add, the promise of the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of light, life, peace, consolation, and joy—the promise of full, free, and everlasting remission of sins—the adoption of children—the sealing of believers unto the day of redemption—and the promise of a joyful resurrection to eternal life at the last day, and of blessedness with Christ in the kingdom of his Father. Now all these promises rest upon Christ, the Rock of ages; and he is our guarantee for the whole—for "All the promises of God are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father,"—2 Cor. i. 20. All the blessings of the New Covenant are ratified and confirmed by the death of Christ—that covenant itself is said to be *in his blood*, or made upon his sacrifice; and as it is established upon better promises, so these promises are all confirmed by his sacrifice, and made sure to the heirs of salvation; his death being the meritorious ground and procuring cause of these promises.

VI. Christ Jesus, in the economy of redemption, is *the sole Medium*, through which all spiritual and heavenly blessings are conferred upon the children of men. He is "the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him." As there is but one God, so there is but "*one Mediator* between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all,"—that is, for men of all ranks, nations, and conditions. All his people were chosen in him—they were

given to him to be redeemed—they were predestinated to the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ* to himself, before the world began,—Eph. i, 4, 5; and they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ,—ver. 3. Their calling—their acceptance with God—their adoption into his family—the sealing and earnest of the Spirit, and the heavenly inheritance itself, are all blessings of grace, which flow unto them through His mediation, and are conferred upon them in virtue of their connexion with Him. As it hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, so, out of his fulness, they receive even grace for grace; for he is made of God unto them, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Hence all their glorying is in him alone:—he is “all in all” to them.

VII. Christ is “all in all,” *in the Union and Communion* of the members of his mystical body—the church. The divine and human natures are wonderfully united in the person of our Immanuel, who is God manifest in the flesh. By means of the Holy Spirit, Christ unites the disciples unto himself, as the members of the body are united to the head, or as the branches are united to the vine—so that they are all connected with him as the medium of their union to God. All our discoveries of the glory of God, as the just God and the Saviour, is in the face or person of Jesus Christ, who is the image of the invisible God. All our access to and correspondence with him, in the way of worship, is founded on His mediation, who is at the head of the general assembly and church of the first-born, as their atoning Priest, and powerful Intercessor with the Father. All the communication and enjoyment of the divine love, is by the Spirit, the Comforter, which Christ hath received, and which he communicates unto the members of his mystical body, that his own joy in his Father’s love may be fulfilled in them, and that their joy may be full,—John xvii. In a word, Christ is the centre

of union among all the members of his mystical body, the church, which is his spiritual building. The blessed God is said to have reconciled all things unto himself, *by Jesus Christ*, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven, having by the blood of his Son's cross opened an honourable communication for his own love and grace to the guilty,—Col. i. 20, and constituted HIM the centre of union among all parts of this grand society, both in heaven and on earth. This is the mystery of his will which Jehovah purposed in himself, and which is now made known by the Gospel:—"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven and on earth, even *in him*,—Eph. i. 9, 10. In *heaven*, the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, who are incorporated as one worshipping assembly around the throne of God and the Lamb,—Rev. v: on *earth*, Jews and Gentiles of whatever nation, condition, or sex; Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—for they are all one in Christ Jesus; united to him by faith, partakers of the same Spirit, and loving one another for the truths' sake. Here all distinctions are merged—and *all*, both in heaven and on earth are united into one society, are gathered together into one body, of which Christ is the head,—so that in the whole of this grand incorporation, "CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL."

What, then, is the Improvement which we should make of the subject we have been considering?

We may reasonably infer from it the mistake of those, who would introduce into the churches of Christ, the distinctions that prevail in the kingdoms of this world. As the great Governor of the universe hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; so, in sending his Gospel among them, he has no respect whatever to the distinctions of nation, or country, kindred, tribe, or tongue, which prevail among them. The divine Law finds them all

guilty, all needing merey; and so all are considered as upon one common level in the matter of acceptance with God. The Gospel, consequently, sets before them all, only one way of salvation, one common ground of hope, and leads all the children of God to glory in one common Saviour. But,

The doctrine of the apostle in my text naturally draws our attention to a subject which has been of late, and indeed is still, the theme of discussion among the professed followers of Christ, both in this country and the United States. I refer to the practice of numerous Christian churches, (so called) in carrying out a marked separation in their religious assemblies, and especially at the Lord's table, and while commemorating the dying love of the Saviour, between human beings distinguished by complexion and colour. It is needless to be more minute and circumstantial in explaining what I refer to; the matter is too well understood to be mistaken. But let me beseech you to bring it to the test of the word of God, and of my text in particular. It is easy to show, were this the place to undertake it, that the commerce in MAN, as still practised in the United States, and the slavery consequent upon it, are completely inimical to the precepts of Jesus Christ and the whole scope of his doctrine; but while I condemn this, I have more especially in view that of professed Christians, in *flat opposition* to the doctrine of the apostle in my text, absolutely refusing to communicate at the same table with those whom they tacitly and *verbally* recognize as their brethren in Christ, because they are "bond-men," and of a sable complexion. "O tell it not in Gath—publish it not in the streets of Askelon!"

Alas! what wretched distinctions has the pride of man's heart made between nation and nation, between rank and rank, between the castes of India, between the negro of the western world and his master, between white and black! But they are all destroyed by the Gospel of Christ. Here is a common Saviour, and a

common salvation! May the merciful Father of mankind hasten the time when the watchmen of Zion shall see eye to eye—when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim—when the Lord shall turn unto the people a pure language—when there shall be one fold and one Shepherd,—and Jesus shall be King over all the earth. These things are promised—let us pray that these promises may be soon accomplished—and to our prayers, let us each, in our humble sphere, add our labours in the good cause, in disseminating just views of divine truth—studying to demean ourselves as Christ's genuine disciples and followers—and in all things seeking to promote his glory, in the view of his second coming.

Finally,—The subject we have now had under consideration, illustrates *the real Unity of the church of Christ*. It is very true, that Antichrist has “scattered the power of the holy people;” but are we not encouraged to look forward to a time in the history of the church, when the prayer of the blessed Redeemer shall be accomplished: “That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” When that period arrives, we shall contemplate a far more delightful exhibition of unity and uniformity, than has ever yet been realized since the rise of Antichrist. But even amidst all that is to be deplored, of faction, and separation, and strife, and division—amidst all that the enemies of the church have done to blaspheme the cause, and all that its friends have unwittingly effected to injure it, there is still a principle of far more real and effective unity among the true disciples of Christ, than many of us are apt to imagine. What constitutes this unity? “Christ is all and in all.” They are one in their union with *him*, and, therefore, one with *each other*—one in their relationship—one in their sympathies—one in their joys—one in their sorrows—one in their hopes and anticipations of an eternal community above.

## SERMON XII.

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### THE CHRISTIAN'S RESOURCE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH.

*I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.*

Psalm lxxi. 16.

THIS Psalm appears to have been written by David, at a very critical period of his life. He had now swayed the royal sceptre over the tribes of Israel, for about the space of forty years, and was rapidly descending into the vale of life. He had subdued all his enemies around him, and the Lord had given him peace in all his borders; when, lo! a rebellion breaks out under his own eye, and that which rendered the matter peculiarly afflictive and cutting, was the consideration, that one of his sons—a son whom he dearly and tenderly loved, was the chief instigator in this unnatural affair. We have the particulars detailed to us in 2 Sam. chapters xv. and xvi, which you may read at your leisure, and you will find in them a key to the import of the Psalm before us.

To enter a little into the meaning of the royal sufferer, it is necessary that we figure to ourselves the venerable king of Israel, in the moment of alarm, on

being informed that the rebellion had broken out, surrounded by a few of his faithful domestics and friends, taking his departure from the city of Jerusalem, passing over the brook Kedron, and hastening, for fear of his life, "towards the way of the wilderness." And now imagine to yourselves, that you see David and his attendants, slowly ascending up the Mount of Olives, the monarch's head covered with the mantle of wo, and his feet bare, his heart ready to burst with grief, and his cheeks bathed with tears. "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet", says the historian, —2 Sam. xv. 30, "and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." What an affecting picture is this! Who that enters properly into the scene, but must sympathise with the aged and venerable monarch! But there is one circumstance narrated in a subsequent part of the history, (See ch. xvi. 5—8, 13,) that still further heightens the picture of distress; it is the cruel conduct of Shimei, the son of Gera. David and his company had to pass the residence of this man, and when they arrived there, it is said, "he came forth, and cursed still as he came; and cast stones at David and at all his servants; and thus said Shimei when he cursed: 'Come out, come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial—the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul in whose stead thou hast reigned;'"—"And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust,"—ver. 13. All this contumely and cruel reviling, David took patiently, and even when his own servants entreated that they might be permitted to go and take off Shimei's head, what was his answer?—"Let him alone—and let him curse on, for the Lord hath bidden him: it may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction; and that the Lord will requite me good for

his cursing this day,"—ver. 12. Such was David's situation; and now keep it in view while you read the first sixteen verses of this Psalm.

"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort; thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O LORD GOD: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many: but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, and with thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

We have, then, in the text, the example of an Old Testament saint, in a season of peculiar difficulty, sorrow, and distress, putting his trust in God, disclaiming all confidence in an arm of flesh, and thus presenting believers under the Gospel with a pattern of faith and patient perseverance, highly instructive and worthy of their imitation; for the New Testament abundantly warrants us in considering the Israelites of old as our *types*,—see 1 Cor. x.; Heb. iii. and xi. Taking up the subject, then, in the light of the New Testament, let us see what instruction we can deduce from it, that may subserve the purposes of our own edification. I apprehend that the Psalmist's language will be found peculiarly appropriate, and suitable for adoption, by the disciples of Christ, while passing through this world,



in their way to the New Jerusalem, the place of their everlasting abode; and to illustrate the subject in the point of view now mentioned—I shall premise some things that are necessarily *implied* in the adoption of this language;—then instance some special times and occasions in the Christian’s life, which peculiarly call for this language;—and conclude by improving the subject.

I. The adoption of the Psalmist’s language—“ I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only,” necessarily implies a conviction on the part of him who uses it, that he has neither righteousness nor strength of his own, adequate to his daily necessities in the Christian life. And this is the first lesson that is learned in the school of Christ. The Gospel of our salvation pre-supposes all mankind to be naturally destitute of any righteousness, in which they can appear with acceptance before a holy God; or of any strength in which they can work out any such righteousness. And hence it commends the love of God towards a perishing world, in making provision for the relief of such guilty, indigent, and hell-deserving creatures, by sending his Son into the world to die for them, and so work out a justifying righteousness. On this all important subject, the apostle Paul thus addresses the Romans: “ For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died *for the ungodly*,”—that is, for those who have no righteousness of their own,—“ for scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet, peradventure, for a good man, some would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,”—Rom. v. 6—8. The divine law, under which we are placed as the creatures of God’s moral government, and which demands of us perfect love to God and our neighbour, finds us all transgressors, and so pronounces all the world guilty before God,—chap. iii. 19—not only

destitute of such a righteousness as the law requires, but also of any inclination to obey it; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be; so that they who are in the flesh cannot please God,"—chap. viii. 7, 8. And this is the point to which every sinner is brought, who commences the Christian life in earnest—he is brought to a full conviction of his own guilt, and depravity, and ruin, so as to renounce all confidence in the flesh. But, further,—

When a Christian adopts the language of the Psalmist, it implies a persuasion, that there is both *Righteousness* and *Strength* in Christ, adequate to the wants and free for the use of his people. And this is the grand discovery which we have in the Gospel. What brought the Son of God into our guilty world—clothed in mortal flesh—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? We have his own account of the matter in such language as the following. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost,"—"He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many,"—"I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work,"—"I am the good Shepherd, and lay down my life for the sheep;—no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father."—Thus he "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But wherefore this deep humiliation and unparalleled obedience on the part of God's beloved Son? Why, it was that he might work out the justifying righteousness in which all his people should appear before God with acceptance. For this end, he was "made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law," or free them from its curse and condemnation, himself being made a curse for them. In this way, he

fulfilled all its righteous requirements—he obeyed its precepts and suffered its penalties—he fully satisfied all its demands, in the way of justice, upon his guilty people, in whose place he stood, and thus became the end of it “for righteousness to every one that believeth.” This justifying righteousness is the grand subject of the Gospel testimony; it is brought near to the most guilty, and it is unto and upon all that believe, without difference,—Rom. iii. 22; chap. x. 4.

But believers have not only righteousness in their divine Substitute and Representative; they have also *Strength* in him, adequate to the supply of all their wants, and corresponding to all their own weakness. For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell—not only a sufficiency of righteousness to justify them, ungodly as they are in themselves—but a fulness of mercy to pardon, and *grace* or *strength* to help in time of need. So we are taught, that when he had by himself purged our sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high, all authority and power being committed into his hands, the Holy Spirit dwelling in him without measure. He is the head of his body, the church, and the source of all vital influence. It is by faith that the members of his mystical body are united to him, and by means of his Holy Spirit, he perfects his strength in their weakness,—2 Cor. xii. 9. He strengthens them with all might by his Spirit in the inner man—invigorating their faith, confirming their hope, quickening their languid affections, and making them to run in the way of his commandments with enlargedness of heart. And thus it is, in every age, that Zion makes her boast: “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength,”—Isa. xlv. 24.

II. We shall now advert to some *special times and occasions* when the believer is more particularly called upon to adopt the language of the text.

In entering upon this head, I would remark, that the

condition of the children of God in this world, is always one of indigence and want, imperfection and weakness; it is a state of dependance upon God, not only for the supply of their temporal wants, the daily bounties of providence, but also for mercy to pardon their daily offences, and grace to help them in time of need. The Christian life is a warfare, a conflict with inbred corruptions and external foes—the world, the flesh, and the powers of darkness, and it can only be sustained by a life of faith on the Son of God. In HIM all fulness is treasured up, and out of that inexhaustible store-house, the Christian receives the daily supply of his spiritual wants. By faith, we are united to Christ, as the branches are united to the vine; and it is only by *abiding* in him—living upon his fulness, and out of that receiving continual supplies, according to our daily necessities, that we live, and grow, and thrive; for, severed or separated from him, we should become withered branches, fit only for the burning! Hence the apostle speaks of “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,”—Phil. i. 19.—And there must be a *continual* supply of the Spirit of God, or our profession will wither; our spiritual life decay, and we shall resemble Israel of old, as described by the prophet:—“Thy goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, it passeth away,”—Hos. vi. 4. Considering the subject in this view, how important are the institutions of the Gospel—the apostle’s doctrine and the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. These are the well-springs of salvation, from which the believer draws fresh supplies of the water of life, as he journeys through the wilderness towards the heavenly Canaan: and it may show us the truth of what the Psalmist says: “The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon: those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: they shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright:—the believer’s rock, and

that there is no unrighteousness in him,"—Psalm xcii. 12—15. "I will be as the dew unto Israel," saith the Lord, by the mouth of his holy prophet—"He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; they that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon,"—Hos. xiv. 5—7. And as all this fruitfulness in the Christian profession, is produced only through divine influence, accompanying the ordinances of the Gospel, how delightful is it to reflect upon the encouragement we have to look for this influence. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him,"—Luke xi. 9, 13.

After all, the apostle certainly speaks of *times of need*,—Heb. iv. 16; that is, seasons of more than ordinary difficulty and distress—times when Christians stand more especially in need of strength from above, or of *grace to help*; and it is in reference to such seasons, that we shall now consider the Psalmist's example in the text as worthy of imitation. Need I remind you, that there is an important connexion between righteousness and strength? The former is necessary to our justification, or to procure our pardon and acceptance with a holy God; and the latter, to enable us to do his will, and to walk in his ways. Now, keeping these things in view, I observe,

1. That in all our approaches to God *in prayer*, the Psalmist's language ought to be ours: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Our prayers, to be acceptable with God, must be *in the Spirit*; that is, they must be offered up in a simple dependance on the Holy Spirit to teach us "what we should pray for;" and *how* to ask aright: hence he is said to "*help*

*our infirmities,*" and to make intercession for us according to the will of God,—Rom. viii. 26, 27. To this duty, then, we should go, in a humble reliance on his aid, as the Spirit of grace and supplication; and put up our petitions to the throne of grace, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, who is the way, and the truth, and the life—the only medium of access to the Father. The holiest saint on earth can find a standing in the Divine presence only on the footing of *His righteousness*; and this must be all our plea at the mercy seat—the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain—the perfection of the Redeemer's righteousness, in which Jehovah is ever *well pleased*—and for the sake of which, he receives sinners into his favour, and bestows upon them the blessings of his grace and salvation. Our Lord, in the days of his public ministry, delivered a very instructive parable on the subject of prayer, viz. that of the Pharisee and the publican, recorded in Luke xviii. 9—14. The former presented his plea, and looked for the divine acceptance, on the ground of the *difference* which there was between him and other men, though he ascribed this to divine grace, saying, "God I thank thee,"—while the poor self-condemned publican had nothing to speak of but the mercy of God, revealed in the atonement: "God be merciful to me a sinner." But how different was the issue of their supplications! The publican was heard and accepted, while the Pharisee was rejected. And this shows us the meaning of Psalm cii. 16: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory: he will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." But, further, I observe,—

2. That when the *conscience is burdened with a sense of guilt*, no language can be more suitable to us than that of the Psalmist: "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of *thine only*." This stands opposed to our seeking relief from any other source than *the atonement*—the blood of Jesus Christ, which

is of infinite efficacy, and cleanses from all sin,—1 John i. 7. It cannot be improper to take some notice in this place of the general strain of doctrine which prevails in the religious world, touching this subject—the way of pacifying a guilty conscience. When a professor falls into sin, he must of necessity lose his peace, and become distressed with the tormenting sense of guilt. How then shall he get rid of the latter, and regain the former? This is, surely, a most interesting enquiry—and the usual way of solving it is, by directing the individual to recall to recollection his past experience of the Divine love, and from that source, to persuade himself that he is a child of God, is interested in his favour, and consequently must finally be saved. This is an abuse of the doctrines of election, and of the perseverance of the saints; and of course the Scriptures give it no countenance. When the Psalmist sinned in the affair of Uriah the Hittite, he unavoidably brought guilt upon his conscience; and it is not at all improbable, that he attempted to stifle the convictions of which he was the subject, by calling to mind his past experience; but when the prophet Nathan had roused him from his stupor, observe his earnest cries for mercy,—Psalm li. 1, 2; his confession of his transgression,—ver. 3, 4; his fervent prayer, that God would *restore* unto him the joys of his salvation, which he had sensibly lost,—ver. 10—12. Even David had to go back to first principles, and seek for cleansing in “the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,”—Zech. xiii. 1. But all this is very opposite to the presumptuous conduct of many in our day, who, with consciences burdened with guilt, can resist the loudest calls in the way of blame, and flatter themselves that all must be well with them, because they have once exerted an act of faith, or tasted that the Lord is gracious. Under circumstances such as those now adverted to, the only scriptural way of obtaining relief

is by *confessing* our sin, and *forsaking* it, and having recourse afresh for pardon to the blood of sprinkling, which first relieved us from despair—the divine blood of the Son of God.

3. A time of *severe affliction and distress*, will naturally suggest to us the propriety of the Psalmist's language: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." That such was the state of things with the Psalmist himself at the time he wrote, is too obvious to require proof; and similar seasons we may all of us, sooner or later, have to encounter. The case of David, when he penned the Psalm, was peculiarly trying, and called loudly for divine support. To be compelled to abandon his throne, quit the royal city, and seek his personal safety by flight, and to continue in a state of exile, deprived of the benefits of public ordinances, was, at his advanced time of life, a heart-rending situation. But these afflictions were doubly aggravated by the consideration, that he owed them to the unnatural conduct of a son whom he tenderly loved, and who, that love forgetting, now sought his life! To such a father as David, this must have been worse than death; but he looked up to heaven for support, and the Lord granted him strength equal to his day. Let us read his own words on the occasion: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works: now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come,"—ver. 17, 18. "Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth; thou shalt encrease my greatness, and comfort me on every side,"—ver. 20, 21. Here is confidence in God! When called to conflict with the troubles of life, you see he does not confide in an arm of flesh, but his language is, "I will go *in the strength of the Lord God.*" Do you ask what encouraged his confidence? I



answer, it was the revealed character of Jehovah. "The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed; a refuge in time of trouble, and they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee,"—Psalm ix. 9, 10. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble,—Psalm xlv. 1. "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion,"—Psalm lxxi, 1. Here, then, is a noble example for our imitation; in every season of affliction and distress; let us go forward "in the strength of the Lord God." Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him,"—Psalm xxxvii. 5, 7.

4. In a time of *temptation to sin* against God, let the Christian adopt the Psalmist's language: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." You recollect the history of the patriarch Joseph,—Gen. xxxix. When tempted by the wife of Potiphar, what did he do? He armed himself with the fear of the Most High, and his answer to the vile seducer was: "How can I do this great evil, and sin against God?" We find the apostle Paul on various occasions placed in very trying circumstances, and we see whence he derived his support.—He reminds the Corinthians, that "there was given him," on one occasion, "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and he thrice besought the Lord to remove it from him,"—2 Cor. xii. 9. Whether this was a temptation to sin, I will not positively affirm; though, from its being called the "messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him," I think it very probable. But however that may be, his prayer was not immediately answered in the way that he expected; but the Lord Jesus, to whom he applied for relief, armed him from above, so that he was enabled to bear up under the temptation; "My grace is sufficient for thee," said the Saviour, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and the apostle thus concludes the statement: "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather

glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then am I strong:" weak in himself, and strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus. But perhaps the finest illustration that is to be found of this branch of our subject, is the temptation of our Lord by the grand adversary, recorded in Luke iv; and we may see from that how He overcame—it was by taking the shield of faith! "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." It is said, "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,"—ver. 8, 10, 12.

5. *When called to the discharge of arduous duties*, we must imitate the example of the Psalmist, and proceed in the strength of the Most High. Such was the case of Abraham, when called to sacrifice his son Isaac on mount Moriah, at the express command of the God of heaven. A more trying case than this cannot well be conceived of. But what had become of this illustrious patriarch, had he conferred only with flesh and blood? God had given him a son in his old age—Isaac was the child of promise—the heir of his fortunes and his hopes. But he receives an express command: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering on a mountain that I shall show thee." And, by faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that "in Isaac shall thy seed be called,"—Heb. xi. 17, &c. To such a trial as this, brethren, it is not likely that any of us shall be called; we may, however, meet with trials in the loss of our friends, our property, or our comforts in life, which we may find it difficult enough to bear, if left to ourselves; let us then meet these trials, whenever they do come, as the Psalmist did, by proceeding in "the strength of the Lord God." The apostle Paul speaks of the trouble which came upon himself and his companions, when preaching the Gospel in Asia;

so that they were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that they despaired even of life; but he adds, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead,"—2 Cor. i. 8, 9. These are some of the situations and circumstances which put our profession to the test, and which we can only bear as we ought, after the Psalmist's example, by going to the conflict "in the strength of the Lord God."

6. I shall now advert to only one case more; but that is one in which we are all interested, for, sooner or later, it is sure to befall us individually; and that is, *when called to conflict with the last enemy*—to encounter the king of terrors. I need not tell you that we must all die—it is the appointment of heaven—the wages of sin—and nothing can be more vain and foolish than to hope to escape it:—there is no discharge in that warfare! But have we ever realized the solemnities of that awful season? Have we ever seriously considered what it is, to quit our hold on this world—to relinquish all connexion with the things of time and sense, and to launch into the invisible state—to become the companion of disembodied spirits—to appear in the presence of a holy God—and be fixed in an unchangeable eternity? Surely, these are solemn realities, which the living should lay to heart. But you may tell me, that though death is called the king of terrors, yet that he is a conquered enemy—and this is most true; for Christ, by his own death, has disarmed the tyrant of his sting—has removed the guilt of sin, by his atoning blood. But who are they that obtain the victory over this "last enemy?" Not all the race of Adam, nor yet all who profess themselves Christians. It is only those "who die in the Lord"—united to him as the members of the body are to the head. And, even to them, death is a solemn affair. It overtakes us all, one by one, in virtue of our connexion with the first Adam in his transgression—thus it is "the wages of sin!" O how could we bear to meet it,

were it not for the consolation afforded us by the Gospel of our salvation. To this conflict, whenever it comes, let us go in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of Christ's righteousness, and of his only; looking for pardon and acceptance solely on the footing of his worthiness and of the divine good pleasure manifested in him, by raising him from the dead and giving him glory as the reward of his righteousness.

To conclude: we may learn from the subject now discussed, that there is a sameness or identity in true religion, under every dispensation, whether Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Christian. This, indeed, is only what the apostle Paul teaches. 1 Cor. xii. 13,—“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit.” But especially do we learn from it, the important station which faith in a Mediator holds in all acceptable worship, and in all holy obedience. It is faith alone, which from the beginning of the world, in all ages, under all the different dispensations of divine grace, and every modification of the state and worship of the church, has been the only principle in the church of the living God, of obtaining the promises, of arming for the spiritual conflict, and of inheriting eternal life—and this station it will continue to retain until the consummation of all things. Faith can do all things that appertain to the divine life, and without it nothing can be effected to purpose. It is the radical principle of the spiritual life—gives the victory over the world—arms with patience and perseverance—and when maintained to the end, puts the happy subject in possession of that which is the end of it—the salvation of the soul. Gal. ii. 20: 1 John v. 4; Heb. xi. *passim*; Eph. ii. 8; 1 Pet. i. 5, 9. Let our prayer ever be, “LORD INCREASE OUR FAITH.”

## SERMON XIII.

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### THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY.

*To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

Isaiah viii. 20.

ISAIAH delivered his prophecies at a period when great corruptions prevailed among the Jews. The professed people of God, under that dispensation, in direct violation of the divine law, (Deut. xviii. 20.) gave heed to wizards and necromancers. Like Saul, when frowning providences threatened them with calamity, they had recourse to those that possessed familiar spirits; and applied to the dead for information to direct the conduct of the living, instead of enquiring at the mouth of God himself, and hearkening to the words of his law, and the testimony of his inspired prophets. This conduct was altogether inexcusable *in them*, who were privileged above all other people upon the earth, in having God so near to them; and, therefore, in the verse preceding the text, the prophet remonstrates with them in very pointed terms. "And when they," the false prophets, "shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter;" pay no attention unto them. "Should not a people seek unto their God?" What manifest absurdity is it, for the living to have recourse to the dead? And then follow

the words of our text:—"To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The Law and the Testimony signify the whole revelation which God had given of his mind to that people, as the rule of their faith and practice, both in the law of Moses, and in succeeding revelations by the prophets that followed. And this was a sufficient rule or directory to them, under that dispensation. But as the canon of Scripture is now completed, the Law and the Testimony must signify, to us, the whole written word of God, contained in the Old and New Testaments; comprising a connected system of divine truth, gradually unfolding itself, till it shines forth in the full blaze of the Gospel, revealing the whole counsel of God. Taking up the subject in this point of view, and in order to illustrate the words of the text, allow me to call your attention to three things.

I.—I shall endeavour to shew, that the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient revelation to us of the mind and will of God.

II.—That we ought to have continual recourse to them for direction, in all matters of faith and duty.

III.—That they are the infallible test of truth and error—the standard to which we ought to bring all the doctrines of men, and all their practices in the worship of God.

I shall then conclude with offering some directions, *how* to abide firm by the rule of God's word.

I. I propose showing that the written word of God is a sufficient revelation of his mind and will to all the children of men. The saints under the Old Testament found it such, though they possessed but little of it in comparison with ourselves. In the nineteenth Psalm, we find David declaring, that "*the Law of the Lord is perfect*,"—ver. 7. And the Lord Jesus more than intimates, that Moses and the prophets were

sufficient to direct the Jews in the way of salvation,— Luke xvi. 29. The apostle Paul declares, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were able to make Timothy wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus: and he further adds, that they were “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness,” 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. God hath now spoken unto us by his Son, who is in the bosom, or secret counsels, of the Father, and whom he hath anointed as the great Prophet, and the Light of the world. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all the truth, and they shunned not to declare all the counsel of God. So that we have Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his apostles, communicating to us all the mind and will of God.

This revelation, therefore, comprises every thing that is necessary for our instruction in the knowledge of God—his being, perfections, and purposes—his grace and will. It contains whatever is necessary for us to know respecting *ourselves*—our true end and everlasting interests. And it is a perfect rule in every thing that relates to *the worship of God*, the order of his house, and the discipline to be observed in it.

But, *further*, it is the *only* and the *exclusive* rule that God hath given us for our direction, in all matters of faith and practice, especially as regards religion, in its more limited sense. Hence we find our Lord reprobating the doctrines and commandments of men as vain and pernicious. “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,”—Matt. xv. 9. And the apostle Paul takes up the subject in his epistle to the Colossians,—chap. ii. 22, “Touch not, taste not, handle not, after the doctrines and commandments of men.” Indeed, he pronounces an awful anathema on those that preach any other doctrine,—Gal. i. 8, &c., as we find repeatedly done, in other places, against those who either add to, or take from, the word of God,—Deut. iv. 2; Rev. xxii. 18, 19. From all this it follows—

II. That we ought to have continual recourse to the word of God for our direction, in all matters of faith and duty. Such is the injunction in our text: "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." When we read the books of Moses, we find him constantly inculcating upon Israel the duty of having the law of their God always before them, and his words in their hearts. They were to teach them to their children—to talk of them while sitting in the house, or walking by the way, or lying down, or rising up:—they were to bind them for a sign upon their hands, and as frontlets between their eyes,—Deut. vi. 6, 9; chap. xi. 18—21. The Psalmist describes the godly man as *delighting* in the law of the Lord, and meditating in it day and night,—Psalm i. 2. Consider the high encomiums which the same inspired writer bestows on the law of the Lord in the nineteenth Psalm. He tells us, it is *perfect*—it is *sure*,—it is *right*,—it is *pure*—it is *clean*—it *makes the simple wise*—it *enlightens the eyes*—and it *rejoices the heart*. The happiness which he found in meditating upon it and keeping it, was more than language could express. And the advantages which he derived from it, in the way of light, direction, and comfort, of quickening, of peace, and of safety, were beyond computation. The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is occupied with this subject from one end to the other, as you will find by reading it at your leisure.

But the Psalmist did not depend upon his own study of the word of God; he joins with that duty, fervent prayer to God for divine teaching; and not only for divine illumination, but also that he might experience every suitable effect of it upon his heart and life. Hear his own words: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,"—ver. 18. "Make me to understand thy precepts; so shall I talk of thy wondrous works,"—ver. 27. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end."



“Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart: make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,”—ver. 33, 36. By these means, he came to have more understanding than all his teachers,—ver. 99. So much for the *Old Testament* saints. Let us now turn our attention for a few moments to those of the *New*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his public ministry, directed the Jews to search the *Old Testament* Scriptures as to his Messianism—the great point at issue between him and them,—John v. 39. The Holy Spirit commends the Jews at Berea for doing this very thing—they searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether the preaching of Paul was in unison with them,—Acts xvii. 11. The apostle himself exhorts Christians to let the word or doctrine of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom,—Col. iii. 16; and to give the more earnest heed to the things they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip out of their minds,—Heb. ii. 1. He exhorts Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words—contained in the writings of the apostles—in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,—2 Tim. i. 13. In short, it is in studying the word of God diligently, in humble dependence on divine illumination, that believers grow in faith, stability, and holiness, and that they are preserved from error.

III. I now come to the third thing proposed, which was to shew, that the word of God is the infallible touch-stone, to which we ought to bring all the sentiments and doctrines of men, and everything that appertains to the kingdom of Christ—and for this plain and important reason,—that it is the only preservative against being led astray by corrupt teachers.

This, indeed, is that very thing which is more especially inculcated upon us in the words of the text—

“To the Law and to the Testimony,” these are the standards by which we are to examine all the doctrines of our teachers, “for, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Now, to try doctrines or practices by this criterion implies, what indeed has been already noticed, that the Scriptures are a *sufficient*, an *exclusive*, and an *infallible* standard of faith and duty; for, upon any other principle, it would be manifestly improper to try all doctrines and practices by them.

It also implies, that we are so intimately acquainted with the word of God, as to be able to judge what particular sentiments or doctrines correspond with it, and what are opposed to it—what is added, and what diminished; for, unless we can do this, we are not prepared for the duty to which we are called,—we are incompetent to apply the rule which God hath committed to us. And, permit me further to remind you, that it is implied in the words of the text—that we ought not to take doctrines or usages upon trust, or receive them implicitly on the authority of uninspired men, whatever their characters may be, even though such doctrines or usages may be very ancient, and generally received. We are to bring all things that relate to our faith and practice to the test of God’s word; and if, on examination, we do not find them sanctioned by “thus saith the Lord,”—if they do not harmonize with “the Law and the Testimony,” our duty is, boldly to reject them, as doctrines of darkness,—“because there is no light in them.” Unless we can judge thus, with firmness, we are continually in danger of being unsettled in our opinions, even upon points of the highest importance, and of being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine—a most unhappy state of things, and of which, I am sorry to say, we have affecting instances daily before our eyes.

This trial of doctrines is frequently inculcated upon Christians in the New Testament. Our Lord warned

his disciples to "beware of false prophets, who came to them in sheep's clothing;" and he gives them a rule by which to try them, in Matt. vii. 15, 16; chap. xxiv. 24, 25. The apostle Paul exhorts the disciples to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good." The apostle John gives this direction: "Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but *try the Spirits* whether they are of God, because many false prophets, or teachers, are gone out into the world,"—1 John iv. 1; see also ver. 2—6. Our Lord commends the church at Ephesus for "having tried them that said they were apostles, and were not, and had found them liars,"—Rev. ii. 2. Indeed, the history of the church, in all ages, abundantly shews the necessity that exists, for this trial of doctrines and practices by the word of God. Let us take a cursory survey of the subject, and we shall see how very important and necessary is the admonition given us in the text.

God gave his law to ancient Israel, as the rule of their national righteousness, and strictly prohibited them from giving heed to wizards, dreamers, necromancers, and false prophets, that would turn them aside from the worship and service of the true God. Yet they often forsook Him, and had recourse to those deceivers—they despised God's law, and put to death his true prophets, and consulted with familiar spirits and wizards, that spake inwardly and muttered. How necessary was it, under these circumstances, to attend to the prophet's direction—"To the Law and to the Testimony," that so they might detect these wicked impostors, and free themselves from their delusions.

In our Lord's time, that is, during the period of his public ministry, although the Jews were cured of idolatry, and seemed to be zealous for "the Law and the Testimony," yet they made this standard void by their traditions. They brought down its purity and spirituality to a mere outward form; and while they were exceedingly zealous for the ceremonial part of it, they neglected the weightier matters of the law—judgment,

mery, and the love of God, insomuch that we find the Lord Jesus thus addressing them: "Ye hypocrites! well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me; but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,"—Matt. xv. 7—9.—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mery, and faith,"—ch. xxiii. 23.

With regard to the types and predictions of the Messiah's kingdom, they had entirely lost sight of their true intent and meaning. In this respect, the Testimony was bound up, and the Law was sealed from the Jewish doctors, its true but mystic sense being made known to Christ's disciples only,—Isa. viii. 16, as it is prophetically intimated a little before the text. Their learned Rabbies had shut up the kingdom of God against men; they had taken away the key of knowledge; they not only did *not* enter themselves, but even such as were entering they hindered,—Luke xi. 52. All the signs of the times; all the predictions of their prophets that were accomplished in Jesus; all the miracles which he performed before their eyes, in confirmation of his mission and doctrine;—all went for nothing with them. Their prejudices, their pride, and their worldly dispositions, blinded their minds, and made them love darkness rather than light. Yet these were the leaders of the people, and were held in high estimation for their religious character and knowledge of the law; though our Lord declares of them, that they were "blind leaders of the blind."

The Lord Jesus Christ, while he exposed the blindness and hypocrisy of these teachers, always referred the people to the Law and the Prophets for what he taught. Yet they had little ear to give to what he said. They implicitly followed their blind guides; and

it was enough for them, that none of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him,—John vii. 47. And even those, who in some measure were convinced that he was the Christ, did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, “for they loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God,”—John xii. 42, 43. The word of God, whose authority alone ought to bind the conscience, was in such cases out of the question.

Such was the deplorable state of things among the Jews, during the period of our Lord's personal ministry. Let us now glance at the times of his apostles.

We have several intimations in their writings, that false teachers, under the Christian profession, began very early to make their appearance in the churches, whose doctrine was corrupt, as regarded both faith and practice. These men are referred to and described in various parts of the apostolic writings. True Christians are frequently warned against being seduced by them; and a rule is very explicitly laid down, whereby to try them. “Beloved, believe not every spirit,”—or doctrine taught by men professing to have the Spirit of God,—“but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets (or teachers) are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God—Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God;—and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,”—1 John iv. 1—6. A preservative against the influence of these corrupt teachers is prescribed, namely, “that believers should be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy pro-

phets, and of the commandment of the apostles' of the Lord and Saviour,"—2 Pet. iii. 2; Jude ver. 17.

The apostles also foretold the dreadful errors and corruptions that were to be introduced by false teachers in the last days, or at a period subsequent to *their* decease; when "the man of sin should be revealed, the son of perdition, opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, should sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,"—2 Thess. ii. 1—10. These were the "perilous times," of which the apostle Paul speaks on another occasion,—2 Tim. iii. 1—10, when multitudes should be found under the Christian name, walking after the course of this world, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,"—from whom he would have the real disciples of Christ to "turn away"—men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. Peter speaks of them as "privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction;" and he foretells, that "many would follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom, the way of truth should be evil spoken of,"—2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

These prophetic intimations of a falling away from the faith and purity of the Christian profession, stand upon record in the apostolic writings, and the event has but too plainly justified the prediction. The mystery of iniquity began to work even under the eyes of the apostles, and it gradually increased, from small beginnings, until it brought forth the "man of sin—the Son of perdition,"—or in the sublime language of the Apocalypse, "the great whore, sitting upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, making the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication,"—Rev. xvii. 1, 2.

The simple doctrines of the Gospel were greatly corrupted and darkened at an early period, by vain philosophy, mysticism, and error. And as to the primi-

mitive church-order, and government, it soon became exchanged for the lordly dominion of diocesan and metropolitan bishops. The ordinances of Christ's house were perverted from their original intention, and mingled up with much superstition and human invention, until, in process of time, the profession of Christianity was so much corrupted, that it became the religion of the Roman Empire, and was united with the State. From this time, the history of what is called THE CHURCH, is, properly speaking, the history of the rise and reign of ANTICHRIST!

Now it is manifest, that had due attention been paid to the word of God, and the Law and the Testimony been regarded as the standard of faith and practice, this monstrous corruption of the heavenly religion of the Son of God, never could have taken place. But let us mark the consequences that now ensued. The word of God was henceforth considered to be dangerous; and all who truly feared God, and had recourse unto it as the rule of their conduct, the alone standard for the trial of doctrines, were branded as heretics, stigmatized as troublers of "the church," and punished by the sword of the civil magistrate. In the issue, the common people were prohibited the use of the Holy Scriptures; and the authority of popes and councils was set above them, and voted to be infallible.

Blessed be God! we live to see this monstrous and impious power broken. But how has it been effected? Why, by bringing the Scriptures out again from the murky recesses of cloisters and cathedrals, vindicating their paramount authority, and appealing to them as the only standard of faith and duty—the infallible test of doctrine. By this single principle, has Antichrist received a deadly blow, which he will never be able to recover. True, indeed, we have yet to lament the schisms and divisions which still mar the unity of the body of Christ; but if we trace those

divisions to their source, they will all be found to originate in a departure from the written word, as the standard of faith and rule of duty, and in a want of subjection to that rule, in all that relates to the kingdom of Christ. Would we wish to see all his disciples keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Let us never imagine that this can be attained by making light of any of his appointments; nor yet by removing any one of his institutions from the place which it holds in his word. It can never be attained by compromising his revealed will for the sake of peace; by accommodating his laws and institutions to the weakness, the ignorance, or the prejudices of men; or by trimming and temporizing for the sake of a little paltry popularity. We must study to find out the rule of the word of God, both as to faith and duty, and firmly abide by it at all hazards, neither fearing the frown, nor courting the smiles of men. When we can open the New Testament and say, thus did the apostles teach, and thus the first Christians believed and practised, and therefore so do we,—we are treading on sure ground, and are always safe; but when we act independently of this rule, and have recourse to *expediency*, we at once throw open the door for innovations of every kind; we act presumptuously, and not as Christ's dutiful and obedient servants; we become legislators in *his* kingdom, instead of subjects;—and shall he not resent it? But, I proposed,—

*Lastly*, to offer some directions, *how* to abide firm by the rule of the Law and the Testimony. And—

1. Let me earnestly beseech you, to make it your study to know and understand the Holy Scriptures. Let the word of Christ, or the doctrine concerning him, dwell in you richly, in all wisdom. Fill your minds and memories with the sacred truths of revelation, so as to become "mighty in the Scriptures." Treasure them up in your hearts, that you may be prepared, on every occasion, to bring forth out of this treasury of divine knowledge



according as the exigency of the day may require, speaking a word in season to him that is weary. It is not sufficient that we admit in general, that the Scriptures are a complete and exclusive rule for the conduct of Christians; we must make ourselves well acquainted with that rule, otherwise we shall not be able to apply it properly, either for our own direction, or the trial of the sentiments and practices of others. "Thy words were found of me," said the prophet, "and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me, the joy and rejoicing of my heart,"—Jer. xv. 16. "I rejoice at thy word," says the Psalmist, "as one that findeth great spoil,"—Psalm cxix. 162. "O how I love thy law: it is my meditation all the day,"—ver. 97. We should imitate this example, and cultivate a love of the word of God.

2. Endeavour to have constantly upon your minds, a deep and abiding impression of the truth and importance of every thing that is therein revealed as matter of faith and duty. Remember that it is the word and will of God, by which we shall all of us shortly be judged. Take it daily as a lamp to your feet, and a light unto your path, and say with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart,"—Psalm cxix. 111. It is the character of the favourites of God that they "tremble at his word,"—Isa. lxvi. 2. We cannot truly fear God, and at the same time, trifle with his word in which he speaks to us from heaven. If we are solemnly impressed with the consideration, that the Holy Scriptures are the voice of Jehovah to us, they will awe the conscience, and have a commanding influence over the judgment—we shall receive them, *not* as the word of man, but as they are in deed and truth, the very word of God; and thus receiving them, they will work effectually in us, as they did at the first in those who believed, and knew the grace of God in truth.

3. Beware of the influence of your own corruptions, in darkening your minds, and filling them with pre-

judices against the meaning of the word of God. Many professors seem more disposed to teach their Bibles, than to let their Bibles teach them. If a doctrine demand their assent, or a duty claim their obedience, which does not happen to fall in with their own notions of fitness and propriety, they immediately proceed to adjust matters by the standard of their own reason, instead of submitting their reason to the Law and the Testimony. This is an evil which Christians cannot be too strongly guarded against. Christianity is a very simple thing : it consists in believing as we are taught by Christ and his apostles, and in practising as we are bidden by them, and doing all these things without murmurings and disputings. In no other way, can we be "the children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Cultivate, therefore, humility, honesty, and sincerity of heart, and see that your faith stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

4. Beware of holding anything as a matter of indifference, which God has revealed as a matter of faith and duty. It is no doubt true, that all things are not of equal importance in the religion of Christ. This, however, can never warrant us in treating with neglect any of the sayings of Christ or his apostles, as things beneath our regard. We should ever keep in mind, that "obedience is better than sacrifice ; and to hearken, than the fat of rams." It ill becomes those who have been purchased with the Saviour's blood, to take upon them to decide, how far he is to be believed and obeyed. His religion contains no *non-essentials*, which his disciples may neglect with impunity, when it is in their power to attend to them ; for it is essential to the character of a Christian, that he "observe *all things*, whatsoever Christ has commanded." And—

5. To conclude : let all who would turn this subject to profit, be earnest in their supplications at a throne of grace, for the enlightening influences of the

Holy Spirit, that their understandings may be opened to understand the Scriptures; that God would give them to see the wondrous things contained in his Law; that he would sanctify them through the word of his truth, working in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. What abundant encouragement have believers to abound in this duty and privilege: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." And, finally, let us beware of resting in mere speculation on the doctrines or duties of revelation; but seek after a practical influence of the truth on our hearts and lives; remembering, that it is not the mere hearer, but the doer of the word, that is accepted of God. "If any man will *do* the will of my heavenly Father," said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." An empty, fruitless speculatist, does not see the importance of revealed truth, and wants that spiritual discernment, which alone can distinguish the voice of Christ from that of strangers.

And hath the Lord of earth and heav'n  
A "*Law*" unto his people given,  
To guide them through the thorny road,  
That leadeth to the throne of God?

What is his Nature, Name, and Will,  
And how, though just, he's gracious stil?—  
How righteousness and peace combine,  
To shew his counsels all Divine?—

And hath the Maker of the world  
The banner of his love unfurl'd,  
And in his "*Testimony*" shewn  
How his true worship may be known?—

He has;—and yet the teachers speak,  
"*This word*" to make the people break,  
And seek to wizards and the dead,  
Instead of God, their living Head.

Strange! that such folly should appear  
In men so blest the Lord to hear!  
But *why* thus scorne a guide so bright?—  
*Their minds are destitute of light.*

## SERMON XIV.

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CHRISTIANS' HEAR GOD SPEAKING IN HIS  
WORD.

*He that is of God, heareth God's words.*

John viii. 47.

THERE are few things of greater importance to the professors of religion, than to look carefully to the grounds on which they assure themselves of an interest in the favour of God. Very much of their present peace, and of their felicity, depends upon it. We know who hath said, "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death;" or in the language of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow,"—chap. l. 11. Indeed the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament abound with cautions and warnings against self-deception, to the danger of which it would appear, that we are all much exposed.

On this very important subject, a large portion of profitable instruction is to be derived from the case of God's ancient people, the Jews. They were taken into covenant with him, in consequence of which they enjoyed peculiar immunities and privileges, which raised them far above all the surrounding nations; and they

claimed a near and intimate relationship to him, with an interest in his favour on that ground: and there is but too much reason to fear, that multitudes among them flattered themselves to their own destruction.

The chapter out of which I read the text, contains a very remarkable discourse between our Lord and some of the Jews of his day; and if we carefully attend to the strain of it, we shall find how great was the stress, which these people laid, on their connexion with the patriarch Abraham. To have a proper view of the subject, it is necessary to read from ver. 30, to our text. From this we see, that these people fondly assured themselves of an interest in the divine favour, because they descended from the loins of Abraham. We see, however, that the Lord Jesus repels this plea, even as John the Baptist had done before him,—Matt. iii. 9; and he goes so far as to tell them, that they were the children of the devil, whose works they did,—ver. 44. Thus he sets aside all their futile pleas, for being the children of the Most High, that were founded on their carnal descent from Abraham; and, in the words of my text, he furnishes them with a short, plain, comprehensive rule, of universal application and use, for regulating the judgments of men on this all-important subject; and the rule is as applicable to us professed Christians, as it was to the Jews: “He that is of God, heareth God’s words.”

I need not tell you, that to be “of God,” is the same thing as to be a child of God—to be interested in his favour—adopted into his family—and entitled to all the blessedness connected with that honourable state. And to “*hear God’s words,*” implies, not only our paying attention to what he says, but also our rendering implicit obedience thereto—believing what he testifies—confiding in his promises—reverencing his authority—trembling at his threatenings—and, in all things, taking his word for the man of our counsel, and the guide of our lives.

We, Gentiles, are not carried away with the prejudice of the ancient Jews, that we have Abraham to our father, and are, *therefore*, the children of God. But are not multitudes, in the present day, deceiving themselves, in the all-important concerns of their souls, with pleas as futile, and on grounds and pretexts equally unfounded and frivolous as those, by which the Jews of old were deluded? How many are there in our day, who claim an interest in the favour of God, on the ground that they are descended from pious parents, and that they were dedicated to God in their infancy by (what they term) *baptism*, in virtue of which they are taught to believe, that they were brought within the bonds of the covenant, and are consequently entitled to a special relationship to God! Now, what is this but the old Jewish plea, about having faithful Abraham to their father, revived under the Christian form? that plea which was discarded and set at nought by John the Baptist, our Lord, and his apostles.

This, however, is not the only delusive plea to which men have recourse in our day. There is another source of self-deception equally prevalent—and perhaps not less destructive—which is founded on an abuse of the doctrine of the divine decrees. Numbers of professors have worked themselves up into a persuasion, on grounds which the Scriptures will not allow, that they are *the Elect* of God, and therefore, they boldly claim a special relationship to Him, and an interest in his favour. If you investigate the foundation of this persuasion, you will find it to be, probably, some remarkable dream that they have had, which made a strong and lasting impression upon their minds—perhaps some remarkable vision or revelation, which they conclude must have come from heaven; or it may be that they have been the subjects of some remarkable awakenings of conscience; the fears of death, judgment, and eternal misery, have overwhelmed them; the arrows of the Almighty have stuck fast in them, and his terrors have

made them afraid. Some build the confidence of their election on the circumstance, that a particular text of scripture darted into their minds in a sudden and unexpected manner, it may be, telling them, that "their names were written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life," &c. These are only a few of the numberless grounds on which persons of the hyper-Calvinistic school in our day are confidently persuading themselves, that they are the chosen favourites of heaven; and the conviction of this, they foolishly imagine, is "the faith of God's elect." But how contrary all this is to the scriptural criterion of divine truth, we shall presently see.

The doctrine of election is, beyond all doubt, clearly taught in scripture, and we have no dispute about it. All the heirs of salvation were chosen in Christ, by an eternal decree, before the world was made—they were given to Christ to be by him redeemed, and they are the many sons, whom he, as the Captain of Salvation, will bring to glory, to the praise of the riches of the divine grace. So far we are agreed; but then the Scriptures will support us in affirming, that no man can know his election of God, until he believes the Gospel, and is brought to rest in Christ and his finished work, as the alone and exclusive ground of his hope, so as to find all his salvation, and all his desire, in what the Gospel testifies of Him. Nor is the evidence of his election then *complete*; for all who have read the New Testament, with attention, must know, that it speaks of many who believe only for a time, as in the case of the stony-ground hearers mentioned in Christ's parable of the Sower,—Matt. xiii. 20, &c.; who, after receiving the word with joy, yet having no root in themselves, endure only for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they take offence, stumble, and fall away from their profession. Now it is upon this view of the matter that the many exhortations are founded, to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure," that is, to our own

minds; to “fear lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should fall short of it.” The crowning evidence of our election is the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ,—1 Thess. i. 3, 4—the fruits of faith, and their *permanency*. It therefore becomes all who profess Christianity to exercise a godly jealousy over themselves—to guard against presumption, and an unfounded confidence towards God—to see that they are holding fast the faith, and are not barren or unfruitful in the profession of it.

Having offered these preliminary observations, let us now turn our attention to the words of the text: “He that is of God, heareth God’s words.” This is the rule by which we are to judge of our own, and of every other man’s, Christianity; and it corresponds with what our Lord says in another place: “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The words of the text imply, that the Holy Scriptures are a revelation from God—that in them he speaks to the children of men on the things which concern their eternal peace—that these sacred pages give us full and explicit information concerning all that we are to believe and practise—and that all who are of God, are taught to hear him speaking to them in his written word, and are obedient to his revealed will. This doctrine I now proceed to illustrate under a few propositions; and I begin with remarking that,—

I. They who are of God, hear him speaking unto them in the Scriptures, in *a voice of Mercy*. What is the Gospel but a proclamation of His mercy to guilty rebels, through a mediator—and that mediator the Son of his love. Its language is: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life; for God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” The Gospel exhibits the great Governor of the uni-



verse as “*in* or *by* Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses”—and so the Gospel is “the word of reconciliation, beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, who hath made his Son to be a sin-offering for us, though personally he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

In the Holy Scriptures, the provisions of mercy are frequently exhibited under the similitude of a *feast*, provided by the rich bounty of “the King Eternal,” to partake of which all the sons of want and indigence are invited, in the most free and unreserved manner, and that without money and without price. Its benign language is: “All things are ready—come unto the feast.” And, divesting the subject of its figurative dress, what is its plain and literal meaning? Why, that the great work of human redemption is completed—that Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and on the third day rose again, according to the Scriptures—that by his death, or the shedding of his precious blood, he made a full and complete atonement for sin, putting it away by the sacrifice of himself—and that now the eternal Father is well pleased in him for his righteousness’ sake. The Gospel is now, by the command of the everlasting God, to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith; and wherever it comes, it speaks the language of peace and pardon to guilty rebels—it declares the good pleasure of God in the death of his Son, and it promises the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, to all, without exception, who receive the testimony as true, and place all their hope and confidence in it. The Gospel does not call upon sinners to *do* anything in order to make their peace with God—but it testifies that God is already pacified through the death of his Son, and its language is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” It is, therefore, the voice of God calling upon

them to cease from working, with a view to life, and to live by what the Saviour has already done.

This, then, is *the voice* which calls the sheep of Christ from their wanderings on the mountains of vanity and sin, and causes them to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. Accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, it arrests their attention; they hear the blessed God speaking to them in it; and they receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth the very word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever—and thus it works effectually in them who so believe it,”—1 Thes. ii. 13. It turns them from the error of their way—from darkness to light—from the power of Satan unto God—they are regenerated or born again by it—their hearts are purified by the belief of it,—and thus, they who were afar off by nature and practice, without hope and without God in the world, are brought nigh—they are justified, adopted into the heavenly family, and made the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. All this is effected by their *hearing* God, speaking to them in the Gospel of his grace, proclaiming pardon and forgiveness through faith in his beloved Son; and this may show us the meaning of the words of Isaiah: “Incline your ear, and come unto me; HEAR, and your souls shall live,”—ch. lv. 3.

II. They that are *of God*, hear him directing them, by means of his word, *in the path of obedience*. He has therein plainly shown them, what is his good, acceptable, and perfect will concerning them—how they should walk so as to please him in all things. Their duty is set before them, both by precept and example. The Lord has graciously given his people *laws* for the regulation of their conduct, both as relates to himself and to one another; and in reading the Holy Scriptures, or hearing them read by others, the believer hears in them, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is the way,

walk ye in it." The Moral Law, or eternal rule of rectitude which is summed up in perfect love to God and perfect love to man, must ever be binding upon his rational and intelligent creatures under every dispensation. Men, it is true, have risen up to contend against its being a rule of life to one who believes the Gospel; but nothing can be more futile, and few things more foolish, than such disputations. Take any one precept of that law—thou shalt not kill—thou shalt not steal—thou shalt not commit adultery,—and ask one of these disputers, whether he feels himself at liberty to break any of these precepts with impunity; and what should we think of the man, that should answer in the affirmative? I am sure I need not tell you! Every man's common sense will instantly dictate the answer. But were the individual to say, that he did not feel at liberty to break any of the precepts of the decalogue, it must prove that his conscience is bound by the authority of that law, whatever his tongue may pretend to the contrary.

But, in this word, the disciples of Christ also learn the will of their ascended Sovereign, and hear Him speaking to them respecting the duties which they owe him, on the grounds of redeeming mercy, love, and grace. When he gave the commission to his apostles to go into all the world, and preach his Gospel to every creature, he added, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." These are the laws of his kingdom, among which his command to be baptized in his name, holds a prominent station. But connected with that, and consequent upon it, is the duty of taking up the cross, and following the Saviour in the path of self-denying obedience, and disconformity to the world,—patiently suffering its reproach and hatred, after the example of the Captain of salvation, and walking in the footsteps of the flock. "My sheep hear my voice," says he, "and I know them, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not

the voice of strangers,"—John x. 27. Nor must I omit to specify among the laws of our ascended Sovereign, his new command of brotherly love, because he himself has stamped it with peculiar marks of his regard, making obedience to it essential to real discipleship, and showing that, where this is wanting, all pretensions to an interest in the divine favour are vain and nugatory.

III. He that is of God, hears his voice *in his Threatenings*,—yes, in the solemn denunciations of his Holy Law. The soul that sinneth it shall die. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the Law to do them. And this shuts him up to the Gospel as the only ground of hope, and makes it to him glad tidings of great joy. Moreover, he hears the voice of God in that awful threatening: "He that believeth not, shall be damned." This leads him to consider the Gospel testimony, as the most important declaration that ever reached his ears,—and unbelief, as the greatest of sins, because it is making God a liar. He now finds, that his only safety for time and eternity, consists in holding fast the faith, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and his first wish, and most earnest desire, is to be found in him, well-knowing that there is no safety for his precious and immortal soul, but under the covert of the Redeemer's blood. He also hears the voice of God warning him against apostacy: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

It is surely a strange notion, which is entertained by many in our day, concerning the religion of Christ, that the motive of fear should be discarded from it altogether—the fear of being disapproved by him at the last day—yea, the fear of being sent to hell. Why, the New Testament abounds with cautions, warnings, admonitions, all motives to fear, and they are enforced upon the disciples of Christ in the most solemn manner. For instance,—

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it,”—Matt. vii. 21—27. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”—Luke xiii. 24—27. “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit,”—John xv. 2. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him,”—Heb. ii. 1—3. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,”—chap. iv. 1. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God." "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,"—chap. x. 23—31, 38. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire,"—chap. xii. 25, 28, 29. See also Rev. chap. ii. and iii.

Who that reads these passages of scripture with attention, can fail to see, how unfounded is that sentiment to which I have referred. It is by putting his fear into their hearts, that the Lord preserves his people from apostacy; and they who do not hear the Lord speaking unto them in the threatenings of his word, while sin and self remain in them, will very soon have little ear to give to the word of his grace, and be little under the influence of it. The threatenings with which the New Testament abounds are very useful to the believer—they keep him from carnal security and self-confidence, and stimulate him to "hold fast the grace whereby he may serve God acceptably with reverence and *godly fear*, knowing that our God is a consuming fire." It is a great mistake to suppose, that to be poor and of a contrite spirit, and to *tremble at the word of the Lord*, must arise from unbelief or a self-righteous spirit. The very contrary is the fact, as you may see from Isa. lvii. 15: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

IV. I observe, lastly, that they who are of God, hear him speaking to them *in his Promises*.

The promise of salvation to him that believeth is an essential part of the everlasting Gospel. "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature," said the Saviour, before

he left the world—“*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*” This is the promise of God, which faith credits, and which the believer relies upon as the ground of his hope,—1 Pet. i. 21; 2 Tim. i. 12. Hence the divine faithfulness and veracity become the objects of his trust and confidence. “Remember thy word unto thy servant on which thou hast caused me to hope,”—Psalm cxix. 14. To doubt or disbelieve the truth of what God has testified or promised in his word, is *unbelief*—and unbelief is nothing less than making God a liar. Observe with what simplicity and clearness the apostle John illustrates the nature of both faith and unbelief in his first epistle, chap. v. 9—12,—“If we receive the witness of men,” (which we certainly do every day of our lives, when we have no reason to doubt their veracity,) “the witness of God is greater,” consequently more worthy of credit from us—“for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son: and this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

But there are many other exceeding great and precious promises on record in the Holy Scriptures, in which our heavenly Father addresses his family on earth, such as, Mat. vi. 31, 34,—“Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things: but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” And the apostle Paul inculcates the very same doctrine, when he says, “Godliness is profitable for all things; it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to

come,"—1 Tim. iv. 8. These, brethren, are a specimen of the exceeding great and precious promises with which the Scriptures abound, for the hope and consolation of the believer; and in taking leave of the cheering topic, let us all be reminded, that

"The voice which rolls the stars along,  
Speaks all the promises."

Reader! are you one of those, who have no ear to give to any thing that God says unto men in his word? who turn a deaf ear to the overtures of his grace, and trifle with the present day of your merciful visitation? He now calls to you, by the ministry of his holy apostles and prophets, in such language as this: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." And what does he say to you in that word? I will recite to you from Isa. i. 18, what he says: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Hear him again, chap. lv. 6,—“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” “Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” But if you turn a deaf ear to His voice of mercy which now accosts you, suffer me to read you his own remonstrance,—

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”—Prov. i. 24—31.



From this subject, may we not infer the error of those persons who regard the written word as *a dead letter*, any farther than as particular texts or passages may happen to be impressed on the mind, by what they imagine to be a special agency of the Holy Spirit?—This, surely, is a fatal mistake, and of most pernicious influence to the souls of men. The holy Scriptures are the voice of God, in which he now addresses the children of men on matters of eternal moment, and that voice is unchangeably powerful to save all who believe it, and to destroy all who oppose it. Let us, then, take heed *what* we hear, and *how* we hear; for by that word we shall all be judged at the last day. And let us beware of deceiving ourselves by resting satisfied with being mere hearers, or talkers about religion, or even with inward impressions and comfortable frames and feelings, but attend to the apostle James's exhortation: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;" and "shewing out of a good conversation, our works with meekness of wisdom."

I now address myself to those who "have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Have you been made so to hear God speaking unto you in his word, as to receive the truth in the love of it,—to come to Christ, and, in so coming, to find rest unto your souls? Remember that he still speaks to you in such language as this: "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Hold fast, then, the faithful word as you have been taught; continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel; run the race of faith with patience, taking the Captain of salvation for your guide and example; and forgetting the things that are behind, daily press forward toward the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

## SERMON XV.

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### THE SETTING UP OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

*Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, &c.*

Acts ii. 41—47.

THE verses now read present us with a most interesting account of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; and in it the fulfilment of that well known prophecy of Daniel, (chap. ii. 44.)—"In the days of these kings, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." In the foregoing part of the chapter, the prophet informs us, that this kingdom had been presented to him in vision, under the similitude of "a stone, as it were cut out of a quarry without hands, and at length becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth,"—ver. 34, 35. This is the subject which, on the present occasion, we are called to examine. May the Spirit of all grace and truth open our understandings, so that we may entertain some suitable apprehensions of it, and thus have our meditations rendered sweet and profitable.

Our adorable Redeemer, having accomplished the ends

of his mission into this world, which was to expiate the sins of his people, by means of his sufferings and death—having risen again upon the third day, according to the Scriptures, and thereby exhibited proof of the perfection of his work, and of his Father's good pleasure in it—convened his holy apostles, and gave them his last and solemn charge, how they were to proceed after his departure in setting up his kingdom in the world,—Acts i. 2, 3, compared with Luke xxiv. 36, &c. “Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,”—ver. 47. In that city they were to tarry, until he sent the promise of the Father upon them—the gift of the Holy Spirit—and thus by his influence endued them with power from on high. Thus qualified, they were to be his “witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Having spoken these words, he led them out as far as Bethany, and there having lifted up his hands, and blessed them, while the apostles beheld, he was taken up into heaven, a cloud receiving him out of their sight. The evangelist Luke tells us, that when this had taken place, “they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

In about ten days after this, the appointed hour arrived; it was the feast of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after the Passover, on the morning of the Lord's day, when the apostles and a hundred and twenty disciples being assembled together for the public worship of God, and to commemorate the resurrection of their Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit descended upon them, distributing miraculous gifts, and enabling them to speak languages to which they were previously strangers, “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” I need not dwell upon the sequel—it must be familiar to us all. Jerusalem was filled with astonishment, the multitude were confounded, and the universal enquiry was, “What does

all this mean?" Some profanely mocked and said, "These men are full of new wine." To vindicate themselves and their religion from this atrocious calumny, the holy apostles exclaimed, that what the people saw and heard, was only the fulfilment of a notable prediction, which had been committed to writing, many hundred years before by the prophet Joel,—chap. ii. 30, 31. And having explained the prophecy, and shown its accomplishment in the events of that day, the apostles proceeded to execute their Lord's commission, by preaching his Gospel—bearing witness to his real character, as the Son of God, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, of his church—whom the Jews had taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain; but whom, nevertheless, God had raised from the dead, and exalted to the highest glory in the heavens, thus fulfilling numerous predictions, which were upon record in their own Scriptures, concerning the Messiah.

In the verses first read, which form the ground of my present discourse, we are presented with the first account, written by the pen of inspiration, of the effects of the Gospel on the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, immediately after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which followed his ascension into heaven. What the Gospel was at the beginning, that it is now: its effects on those who first received it, were most powerful and salutary. It is only necessary to read the text with due attention, to be satisfied of this. A multitude of ignorant, besotted Jews—hardened infidels, with hearts full of enmity to God, and the Gospel of his Son, whom they had lately taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain—are brought to the knowledge of the truth, led to cry out for mercy and forgiveness, and receiving the apostles' doctrine concerning Christ and his salvation, are made joyful in the hope of eternal life.

Now it is natural to ask, why does not Christianity produce all these effects still? Are men less guilty,

and miserable, and depraved than formerly? Is the Gospel a less faithful saying than it was at the first, or less worthy of all acceptation? Are its claims less powerful—its reasonings less cogent—its demands less exclusive—than when they were urged by apostles and apostolic men? Are its consolations diminished in number or suitableness—its promises less heavenly or precious—its calls and invitations less pressing and urgent? Are the terrors of the Lord less appalling, or the mercies of the Lord less attractive? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? or, do the words of God now fail to profit those who receive them? Is the kingdom of heaven, in fine, less glorious in itself, or its Saviour and King less worthy to be served and adored, than he was at the beginning? If these questions can only be answered in the negative, it becomes an important inquiry, what has occasioned the vast disparity between the former and the present times; and how it is, that the professed disciples of Christ, and especially his churches, are so different from what his first churches were?

The verses which I first read, place before us a company of sinful mortals,—hearing the doctrine of salvation from the lips of the apostles, and gladly receiving that doctrine as a message of mercy and eternal life,—drawn by means of the belief of it into the closest union, to give themselves up to the Lord, and to walk in obedience to all his commandments and ordinances, at once for their own benefit, and the profit of many that they might be saved; discovering a spirit of the most delightful union and fellowship with each other; and experiencing a gladness of soul, in combination with a fervency of spirit in serving the Lord, which demonstrated the genuineness of their devotion, and proved how powerfully it was calculated to recommend their faith to others. Favour me with your attention on the present occasion, while I endeavour to point out to you some of the leading and more prominent features which dis-

tinguished the religious profession of the primitive Christians, who constituted the Church at Jerusalem.

I. Their religion was entirely of a *heavenly Nature and Origin*: they knew nothing of Christianity, but as it was taught them from above—as they received it from the lips of inspired teachers—as it announced to them a message of mercy and deliverance from heaven. This led the “three thousand gladly to receive the word of the apostles.” Theirs was not the religion of tradition, of habit, or of accommodation. It was not the production of any outward circumstances, or submitted to from the influence of secondary motives. The Gospel which they heard, and in which they rejoiced, sounded in their ears as the voice of God. It came as a message from the eternal throne, full of attraction, and full of glory. Its command was the authoritative mandate of Him, whose word is his law—it told upon their hopes, like the music of heaven, and upon their fears, like the shrieks of the damned. When they first heard it, they were pricked in their hearts, and exclaimed, Men and brethren what shall we do? The instant they believed it, they were filled with joy and transport; and their joy no man could take from them.

It is easy to perceive, that there is a vast difference between receiving the Gospel in this manner, and experiencing its heavenly power, unclogged and unaided by any earthly circumstances—and taking it up as a profession, or embracing it as a system of opinions. The first Christians had nothing to recommend their religion to them, but its own intrinsic suitableness and glory. They were not prepared for its reception, either by Judaism, or Gentilism, or the state of things around them. All their hereditary prejudices, their established habits, their prevailing opinions, were unfavourable to its reception and its influence. When it operated upon Jews, it delivered them from their vain conversation, received by tradition from their fathers; and when it operated on Gentiles, “it turned them from dumb idols to

serve the living and true God." To accomplish such a change, almighty power was required; and when it was once felt, nothing could prevent its full effect.

Under whatever view these persons contemplated the Gospel, they found it to demand their implicit regard. Its doctrines were divine, and, therefore, worthy of implicit belief. Its laws were divine, and, therefore, entitled to unreserved obedience. Its promises were divine, and, therefore, worthy of unqualified confidence. Its institutions were divine, and, therefore, entitled to the highest respect. They had one Saviour and one Master—but HE was Jesus, who was and is over all, "God blessed for ever," and consequently worthy of their supreme affection and undivided homage. As a necessary consequence of thus receiving the word,—

II. *They were baptized, and added to the Church.*—This was conformable to the revealed will of the Lord Jesus, who, before he left the earth, commissioned his apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, or "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

I know not how it is come to pass in the present day, that the ordinance of Baptism has fallen into disrepute among many of the professed disciples of Christ. They think highly of the benefits of church-fellowship, and of the Lord's supper, which is a commemoration of his death and passion; but as to baptism, though instituted by the very *same authority*, and pregnant with the richest import, they almost pour contempt upon it. They tell us it is not essential to salvation, and that when they were infants they were dedicated to God by their pious parents; that this serves every purpose, and that they do not wish to be singular!

It was not in this way, however, that the first Christians manifested their love to the blessed Redeemer, and their submission to his authority. There were no such idle and evasive pleas among the three thousand convicted Jews on the day of Pentecost. It was quite sufficient

for them, that Christ had revealed his will, that all his disciples should be baptized in his name, and in this way enter his visible kingdom; and they "made haste, and delayed not to keep his command." Am I speaking these things in the hearing of any persons who know their Master's will, and do it not? Permit me to remind you of his own words: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" How do you expect to answer in the great and solemn day of account, for the manner in which you are trifling with his institution?

III. Another feature in the religion of the first Christians was, their conscientious *observance of the public ordinances* appointed by the Lord for the benefit of his church. To these ordinances, and the attention paid to them by the baptized disciples at Jerusalem, the inspired writer refers, when he says, "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers,"—ver. 42.

The *apostles' Doctrine* was the public teaching of the church—then, of course, conducted by the apostles personally. Since their decease, we have it in their writings, which are given us, like all the other Scriptures, by divine inspiration, and are "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness."

The *Fellowship*, as distinguished from the other things mentioned, is the contribution for the poor and the necessary expences of keeping up the public worship of God, like the freewill offerings under the law; and this constituted a regular part of the engagements of the first day of the week.

The *breaking of Bread* is the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which, beyond all dispute, was then observed every Lord's day—thus combining together the ordinances commemorative of the death and resurrection of the Saviour. The *Prayers* and *Praises* are the other devotional parts of public worship.

These sacred institutions enter into the very substance



of genuine religion; and the proper and conscientious observance of them enters deeply into the enjoyment and practice of Christianity. They constitute the food of the Christian life; and on their being properly observed and properly used, belong, under the blessing of God, the healthy state of religion in the soul. They were designed by the King of Zion to supply an increase of knowledge to the disciples on all the points of doctrine, practice, and comfort, which their diversified circumstances require—to keep up, by public association and animated address, that excitement and fervour which are in danger of being lost in the business and bustle of the world—to counteract that tendency to selfishness, worldly-mindedness, and unconcern about the good of others, which are so natural to fallen creatures, even in a redeemed state—and to afford opportunity for the exercise of the various gifts and talents bestowed upon the members of the church by its glorified Head, in the due employment of which, the strong help the weak, the rich assist the poor, the more enlightened instruct the ignorant; so that “they who have much, have nothing over, and they who have little, experience no lack.” In this way God hath wisely tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in it. And here I cannot help remarking, how very different all this is, from what is to be found in the present day, even among our dissenting churches, where *one man* monopolizes all the gifts, or at least fills all the different offices or functions of the body, so that he is alike head, and hand, and foot, and eye, and; in a word, almost every thing but ear! This is an *entire* departure from the primitive church-order; for, “from the beginning, it was not so.”

The historian tells us, that the believers in Jerusalem “*continued stedfastly*” in these ordinances; that is, they observed them in the most conscientious and persevering manner. They never imagined that they were at liberty to observe or neglect them, as their humour, or caprice, or convenience, might dictate. They did not

suppose for a moment, that they were at liberty to neglect them under any circumstances, except those of the most pressing necessity; or that they had any right to endeavour to substitute something else in their place. Nor did they conceive, that they were entitled to observe some and to neglect others at their own pleasure; as for instance, that they might attend the preaching of the word, and join in public worship, but neglect the fellowship and the breaking of bread. So monstrous a disjunction, though common among the generality of dissenters in our day, never entered into the imaginations of the primitive Christians. They knew and felt it to be their duty, and their privilege also, to observe all the ordinances and commandments of their Lord thankfully; and in this way they testified their love to Him and to one another.

The stedfastness, or regularity and perseverance, with which the ordinances of the Lord's house were observed, arose, in a great measure, from the pleasure and the profit which they experienced in and derived from them. In assembling with their brethren, they enjoyed the presence and promised blessing of their Redeemer. They said, "it is good for us to be here." They had fellowship one with another; and not only so, they had fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. The congregation of the saints was to them, literally, the house of God, and the very gate of heaven. They were glad when it was said to them: "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he shall teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Their feet stood within its sacred enclosure—they prayed for its peace—they enjoyed its prosperity,—and they sung, with sacred delight—

" Here would I find a settl'd rest,  
 Whilst others go and come;  
 No more a stranger, or a guest,  
 But like a child at home."

How different is all this, brethren, from the desultory, irregular, and capricious conduct of many in our

day! The most trifling occurrence is, with them, sufficient to disconcert their attendance with the people of God, and their enjoyment of the most important privileges which belong to our present state. The attractions of a popular preacher—the solicitations or intrusions of friendship—the trifling inconveniences of local circumstances—the changes of the weather—with a hundred other such things, of which one feels ashamed to speak; reproaching, as they do, the effeminacy of the age, or its want of principle, and all shewing, how wofully the present generation have deteriorated, in their profession of Christianity, from the primitive standard.

IV. I observe, further, that another prominent feature in the religion of the primitive Christians was—“*the spirit of Love and Union*, which appeared among them, and animated them in all their conduct to each other.” The multitude who believed, at the beginning, were of one heart and of one soul. They regarded each other as members of the same heavenly family—as fellow-heirs of the same glorious inheritance—as the brethren for whom Christ died. Their union did not consist merely in subscription to a common creed, or the observance of a common formular, or in subjection to some accredited standard of human construction. It was a union of heart and affection, a harmony of principle—they loved one another for the Gospel's sake, in which they found a common source of joy and salvation. This hallowed communion of hearts and souls appeared in the preference which they discovered for each other's society, to that of all around them. Their friends and companions were not the men of the world, with whose fascinating manners and talents they might have been charmed. They were not even their friends and relatives, destitute of the knowledge of the truth, or the power of religion. They were not exclusively persons of their own rank and class in society among Christians. There were no *castes* among the disciples of Christ in that age of the church—no impassable

lines of demarcation, separating the grades into which they were divided—there was then no religious aristocracy, distinct from the general community of the faithful—but Jew and Greek, male and female, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, were all one in Christ Jesus. The body was one, and the members of it, however many, and however different, all felt that they belonged to each other. There was, therefore, no schism in it, for all the members cared equally the one for the rest.

This delightful union appeared in acting rather than in speaking; in mutual sympathy, weeping with those who were subjects of affliction and distress, and rejoicing with those that were prosperous. Their devoted and united attachment was formed and fostered by the peculiarity of their circumstances. The lively impression which they had, of the infinite importance of that salvation of which they were common partakers, naturally led them to regard each other with feelings of the most peculiar and powerful kind. They loved each other for the truth's sake which dwelt in them, and which they trusted would abide with them for ever. In the display which that truth furnished, of the matchless love of God to guilty men, they found a reason for loving those thus loved of God, more powerfully influential than all the considerations which could excite feeling towards the rest of their fellow creatures. Hence they reasoned as well as felt: "If God so loved us, we ought to love one another." That love, they perceived, had no respect to the artificial or fictitious distinctions of society, the claims of birth or talents, of opulence or rank—but regarded men simply as guilty and wretched. The privileges and blessings which that love provided, and the glory which it promised, they clearly saw belonged to all the real disciples of Christ—all who partook of the faith of Jesus,—and that they would be in proportion to the power and influence of that faith in whomsoever it was found. They understood that the world would shortly pass away, and all its glory vanish, and that they alone who did

the will of God, should endure for ever; that their companions and associates through eternity, should not be those most distinguished by their powerful and brilliant talents, by their elevated rank, or by any other circumstances of an earthly nature, such as now recommend men to each other; but their fellow disciples—their friends and brethren in Christ. They anticipated the period when the closest and most powerful of mere natural ties should be for ever broken—when the relationship of kindred and consanguinity should be dissolved never to be restored;—when all that constitutes the present social compact, should be destroyed among those earthly elements, which are incapable of forming the combinations of the kingdom of heaven; and that then the fathers, and mothers, and brethren, and sisters, in the Gospel, should enjoy together the high rewards of everlasting life.

V. *Their abundant Liberality* was a distinguishing feature in the religion of the primitive Christians. It is recorded of them, that “they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them as every man had need.” That the wants of the poor were adequately supplied, is evident on the face of the narrative; for, there were none among them that lacked, and they had, as it were, all things common. This astonishing manifestation of liberality appears to have been, in some degree, peculiar to the church at Jerusalem, for we do not read of any intercommunity of goods in the other churches; and perhaps the reasons of it are to be found in the peculiar circumstances of that people. They had obtained pardoning mercy at the hands of God, for the greatest wickedness—the most atrocious crime, which could be committed, viz. the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory—the image of the invisible God! Hence, having experienced much forgiveness, they were led to love much, and this was one way of shewing it. But their liberality could scarcely

be restricted to the relief of the necessitous poor; the sale of the estates could not be necessary for this purpose; it was probably exercised, with a view, chiefly to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

But, indeed, the whole matter admits of an easy explanation, which leaves us not to wonder at the liberality of those early ages of the church, but at the penuriousness now manifested. The first Christians considered themselves as bought with the precious blood of Christ, to be his servants and friends for ever. They therefore conceived that they were not their own, but the Lord's property. From his munificent hand they at first received all they possessed,—a second time they were made his by the most costly purchase. To use it therefore for him, and not for themselves alone, they considered themselves bound in justice and in gratitude. They were convinced that the most profitable manner in which they could invest this world's good, was by embarking it in the Saviour's cause, and devoting it to the advancement of his glory. They knew that in this way, what was two should be made five; and what was five should become ten. Considering themselves in the light of stewards of the gifts of Providence, they looked forward to the day when they must give an account of their stewardship, and then the consolation would not be found, in reflecting on the amount that had been spent in adorning and pampering the body—gratifying the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life—in having lived in splendour, and died in glory; but in having ministered to the necessities of the saints, relieved the prisoner, cherished the widow and orphan, and by the works of faith and labours of love, which recommend the Gospel, in having promoted the interest of Christ's kingdom in the world. They were convinced that all on earth was unsatisfactory and perishing—that in heaven alone was the better and enduring substance. The best use, therefore, which they could make of the unrighteous mammon, was by employing it to

multiply the friends of Christ, who, when they failed, would receive them into everlasting habitations.

6. Another feature of primitive Christianity is, "*the Joy with which it inspired all who came under its influence.*"

It is only necessary to read the New Testament with attention, to perceive that this was invariably the case with those who believed the Gospel at the beginning. Those who proclaimed it called it, "glad tidings;" those who received it, felt it to be such. When "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them," we read that "there was great joy in that city." When he preached it to a solitary eunuch in the desert, he sent him "on his way rejoicing." The disciples who believed in Antioch, "were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit." And the Philippian jailer, though driven to desperation, no sooner received the word of the Lord, than he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Joy was not only the invariable effect of the reception of the Gospel, but the nature of the joy corresponded with the truth received, and the hope entertained. It was altogether spiritual and heavenly in its nature. Hence it is called—joy in the Holy Spirit—joy in the Lord—joy in believing—rejoicing in hope—joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It was not a sudden glow of feeling, a transient emotion, partaking rather of the nature of passion than of sentiment. It was calm, rational, abiding, and diffusive, in its influence—the effect of a powerful and permanent cause. It was as lasting as it was exquisite, and distinguished from all terrestrial excitement. It entered into every thing in which the believer engaged—the most common concerns of life, as well as the exercises of religious worship. They not only praised God in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts unto the Lord; but they did also "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." It was, in fact, a state of mind, and not a

mere exercise of the animal spirits. It took its rise from a source, in which alone there is fulness of joy. The Gospel, as preached by the apostles, and received by those that rejoiced in it, was not a system of fine notions which pleased the intellect, but could not relieve the labouring heart of man, or alter, by its powerful operation, his state of wretchedness. It commended itself to him as the healing balm of his depraved nature, by subduing the very seed of wo within him, and controlling the otherwise uncontrollable power of outward events upon him. Those who are divinely taught its truths, and whose only hope is the finished work—the all-perfect sacrifice of the beloved Son of God—know what true happiness means, viz., the enjoyment of the divine favour. They have the beginnings of eternal life; and though affliction may strew their path, and sorrows occasionally encompass them arround, they are joyful even in tribulation; for they are taught to look beyond this passing scene to a state of eternal rest and blessedness, where sorrow and sighing shall for ever cease, and where there are pleasures for evermore.

7. Lastly, the case of the church at Jerusalem presents us with a pleasing picture of the *Spirituality and Devotion of the disciples*: they were daily engaged in the temple in exercises of devotion, praising God—and in breaking bread from house to house.

When they thought on what they once were—on what they had done in putting to death the Son of God—and on what they deserved to be; and reflected on the transition they had undergone, in passing from death unto life—and on the hope set before them, they must have felt like men that dreamed. Their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with singing; and they said one to another, “the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” This, it is true, was the day of their espousals, the time of their first love; and though the high and excited feeling which was first experienced subsided in some degree, and became



more subdued, especially after the great fight of affliction, which they were called to endure for the Gospel's sake,—Heb. chap. x. 32, &c.; yet, there is reason to think their devotional ardour continued at a more elevated point than is commonly found among professors of the present day. Their circumstances brought God continually before them, and rendered his presence indispensable to the peace and tranquillity of their minds. Nothing but a high state of spirituality could have sustained them under the persecutions, privations, and sufferings, they were called to endure. But their whole souls were thrown into their religious profession, and the Gospel of salvation became at once the study and business of their lives. It was the element in which they lived—it was both the food and medicine of their souls.

Hence their religious profession diffused itself through all their deportment and conversation, as well as in direct acts of worship. It was not a matter attended to at stated times merely, or at occasional seasons only—it pervaded their whole lives. They prayed without ceasing, and in every thing gave thanks. Whether they ate or drank, or whatever they did, they had the glory of God in view. Thus every occupation and pursuit was sanctified, and a sacred consistency of character maintained. They were temples of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in them, and they yielded their bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which was only their reasonable service. All this is not only in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel, and consistent with its spirit, but it is the precise state of mind and character which we might expect to arise from its principles. Nothing short of this is genuine, consistent, full-toned Christianity. Christ demands the first place in the hearts and affections of his redeemed people, and he will be satisfied with nothing less. If the kingdom of God and his righteousness be, as they ought to be, the first object of pursuit with us, our religion will

resemble, in some happy measure, that of the primitive Christians, whose case we have now had under consideration.

What now remains, but that we bring the subject home to ourselves, and examine our profession by the standard presented to us in the church at Jerusalem? It is by *that* we should try ourselves, and not by what we find in the world around us. A due consideration of the state of things which has been now feebly described, and a comparison of the early and the latter condition of true religion in the world, cannot fail to produce the most humbling views of ourselves, our attainments, and our enjoyments. In realizing and impressive views of the truth—in devoted attention to the ordinances and institutions of the kingdom of God—in ardent attachment to each other—in the exercises of generosity and benevolence—in heavenly joy—and in pure and elevated devotion—the great mass of Christians of modern times, it is to be feared, fall greatly below the character of the primitive Christians, and beneath what might have been expected from the distinguishing privileges which they enjoy. Yet it is to the standard of primitive truth that we ought to bring our sentiments, our feelings, and our conduct. There has been much said, of late years, about a great revival of religion, both in America and Britain, and much need there is of it. But let us not be imposed upon by superficial appearances. Every revival of religion must be tried by the ancient standard, and weighed in the scales of divine truth as to its nature and effects. As it approaches to, or diverges from, what the apostles enjoined, and the consequences of their ministry illustrate, it demands our approbation, or calls for our opposition.

Further:—In what is recorded concerning the church at Jerusalem, we have a pattern of what a true church of Christ ought to be, in respect of its proper members, its public ordinances of worship on the Lord's day, and its social practices. The members of the

church, you see, were professed believers in Christ, baptized on a personal profession of their faith, and in consequence added to the church. The stated observances of the Lord's day, were the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the Lord's supper, prayer, and praise. The first churches were entirely unacquainted with the modern practice of hiring a minister, to conduct these various branches of worship, or indeed any other. They looked up to the glorified Head of the church for gifts to be bestowed upon the body at large—gifts for the work of the ministry, the perfecting of the saints, and their general comfort and edification; and He, who is ever faithful to his promise, did not fail to vouchsafe them. Thus it was that the truly Apostolical churches were built up as habitations for God through the Spirit.

The God of grace in Zion dwells,  
And there his boundless love reveals;  
He rais'd and he adorns the house,  
Where he his richest gifts bestows.

Walls of salvation built around,  
Guard and defend the holy ground;  
Pillars of Gospel truth and grace  
Support and beautify the place.

Within her courts the saints abide,  
By heavenly bounty well supplied;  
The table is divinely stored—  
Celestial dainties crown the board.

Here, mercy opens all her store,  
To heal the sick and feed the poor;  
Here Gospel promises impart  
Relief to every wounded heart.

Peace here extends her balmy wings,  
And joy in every bosom springs;  
Here saints inspir'd with zeal and love,  
Anticipate the bliss above.

O may my God on me bestow  
A dwelling in his house below!  
'Till I at length, thro' grace, shall rise  
To fairer mansions in the skies.

## SERMON XVI.

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### THE NATURE, THE GROUNDS, AND THE ADVANTAGES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

Psalm cxxxiii.

THE kingdom of the Messiah, or the state of things under the Gospel dispensation, was a subject which deeply engaged the attention of the ancient prophets. The apostle Peter, referring to it, tells us, that “they prophesied of *the Grace* which should come unto us;” and he adds, “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but *unto us* they did minister the things which are now reported by them that have preached to us the Gospel—things which the angels desire to look into.”\*—Like the patriarch Abraham,—who, by the Spirit of prophecy, saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad,—these Hebrew seers contemplated the same object, and exulted in the prospect; though they well knew they should not live to realize the promised

\* 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

grace. We cannot wonder, therefore, that the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom should form the burden of many of their sublimest songs of praise in the temple worship, as from many parts of the book of Psalms it is manifest was the case, and of which we have an instance in the Psalm before us.

This short, but beautiful, composition, which has deservedly challenged the admiration of the critics in all ages, is generally understood to have been written by the inspired penman on the termination of the civil wars, which so long prevailed between the two houses of Saul and David;—a happy and memorable event, on which the writer congratulates his countrymen, wishing them, in the character of brethren, henceforth to enjoy the sweets of internal and domestic peace.

We must not, however, stop short with this literal application of the Psalm to David and the affairs of *his* kingdom, which we know were shadows of better things to come; but looking through the type, we must seek for the thing typified, and this we shall find in the kingdom of Him, who was the Son and Lord of David, and in the blessedness connected with it. Taking up the subject, therefore, in the light of the New Testament, we shall find in this elegant poem, a beautiful description of a Christian Church; under which view, I shall now attempt to illustrate it, and in doing so, shall consider,—

Who are *the Brethren* here spoken of;—the nature of *their Unity*; what is implied in their *dwelling together* in that unity;—and lastly, the happiness connected with it, for it is said to be both *good* and *pleasant*.

I. If we take this Psalm, literally, as applying to the Old Testament state of things, then the term *brethren* must, in this view, denote the children of Israel according to the flesh—the natural seed of Abraham, who was the parent stock of the whole nation. The Israelites were all *brethren* by natural descent—the children of

one father, namely, Abraham, of which they made their boast.\* They were separated from all the nations of the earth, as God's peculiar people and *children*. And so we find him calling Israel his *first-born*;† and in reference to this, the apostle says, "to them belonged the adoption."‡ So they were brethren, not only as claiming Abraham for their father, but also as being the children of God; a privilege of which they might well boast, as we find they did, when our Lord accused them of doing the works of their father, the devil. "We are not born of fornication," say they, "we have one Father, even God."||

We must, however, always keep in remembrance, that their carnal descent, their adoption, and their brotherhood, were only *types* of the heavenly birth, the spiritual adoption, and the brotherhood of the children of God under the New Covenant. And hence we find, John the Baptist, our Lord, and his apostles, repelling all claims to real relationship to God, which are founded upon their fleshly birth, and insisting that the latter was of no avail whatever in the kingdom of Christ. Thus we find the apostle testifying to the Romans: "They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," that is, of God.§ And to the Corinthians he writes: "Wherefore, henceforth, know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."¶ All which corresponds with the doctrine of the Saviour himself, when he said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see, or enter into, the kingdom of God."\*\*

\* Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 33, 39. † Exod. iv. 22.

‡ Rom. ix. 4. || John viii. 41. § Rom. ix. 6, 7.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 16, 17. \*\* John iii. 3—5.

The brethren, therefore, intended in the text, are the true children of God, by *election* and *predestination*; for they were “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world—being predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”\* They were also redeemed from bondage and wrath by the blood of Christ, and so are the children of God by *redemption* or purchase; for the Saviour took part with them in flesh and blood, that “through his own death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.”† Thus “they were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot;”‡—“who gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”|| They are born again not of blood, nor of the will of man, but *of God*.§ Hence they are the children of God by *regeneration*; for God, of his own will, begets them to the faith, by means of the word of truth—the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever,”¶—and in virtue of this, they are received into the household of God, being made free by the Son,—John viii. 35, &c.; Rom. viii. 29. Thus they are the children of God, by the true *adoption*; “for when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”\*\* And so, likewise being the Sons of God and brethren of Christ,†† they must consequently stand in the relation of brethren to each other; whence numerous and important

\* Eph. i. 4, 5. † Heb. ii. 14. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

|| Titus ii. 14. § John i. 12. ¶ James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23.

\*\* Gal. iv. 5. †† Heb. ii. 11.

duties mutually result, and are frequently enjoined upon them in the word of God. But let us, now,—

II. Consider *the Unity* of this brotherhood as explained in the New Testament, that we may see wherein it consists; and it is the more necessary for us to examine this matter, inasmuch as the subject is too little attended to by professors in the present day.

The apostle Paul illustrates the subject in his epistle to the Ephesians,—chap. iv. 4—6; and his account of the matter may serve as a clue to direct us in our enquiries respecting what is essential to the unity of a Christian church, or the mystical body of Christ. “There is one body,” says he, “and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” We shall briefly consider each of the particulars here specified. The Christian unities, therefore, comprise,—

1. A unity of *the Spirit*. For when the apostle describes a Christian church under the similitude of a body, he tells us that it has *one Spirit*, which animates it, and actuates all its real members, just as the soul does the body of a man. This one Spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, which Jesus, when he ascended up on high, received from the Father, in all its plenitude; for the Father did not communicate the Spirit by measure unto him.\* This Spirit dwells in Christ, as the head of his body, the church, and is included in that *fulness* which it hath pleased the Father to treasure up in Him.† It is by means of this Spirit, that the members of Christ’s mystical body are united to Him and to each other. “Hereby,” says the apostle, “we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”‡ And again, “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”||

\* John iii. 34; ch. vii. 38, 39. † Col. i. 19.

‡ 1 John iii. 24. || Chap. iv. 13.



2. Their unity further consists in their all having *one Faith*. They all believe the testimony which God hath given of his Son. They believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—that he came into the world to save sinners—that he was delivered up unto death for our offences—that by his death he made atonement for sin—and that God raised him from the dead—that he is WELL PLEASSED in him for his righteousness' sake—and that all who believe this truth shall be saved.\* This is the faith once delivered to the saints—the faith of the Gospel, for which they are called to contend, standing fast in one Spirit with one mind.† As the children of God are all partakers of the Spirit of Truth, and are all taught of the Lord, so they must consequently all possess this one faith—they must all have “like precious faith with the apostles in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”‡ They have, therefore, “*a unity* of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God,” and they count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of this knowledge.∥

3. Having all one faith, they have, consequently, *one Hope*, which the apostle expresses by their being “called in one hope of their calling;” and what is this but the heavenly inheritance, which is set before them as the object of their joint hope and expectation—“the hope laid up for them in heaven,” and of which they heard in the word of the truth of the Gospel.§ It is termed “the hope of their calling,” because God hath called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus¶—and hence it is termed “the prize of their high calling,” in or by Christ Jesus.\*\* Being called and justified, “they rejoice in hope of this glory.†† To this lively hope they are begotten by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.‡‡ I may also add, that—

\* John xx. 31; Rom. x. 9. † Phil. i. 27.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 1. ∥ Phil. iii. 8. § Col. i. 5 ¶ 1 Pet. v. 10.

\*\* Phil. iii. 14. †† Rom. v. 1–3. ‡‡ 1 Pet. i. 3.

4. They have a *Unity of Love*. We may see how the apostle connects these things when writing to the church at Colosse. "Since we heard of your *faith* in Christ Jesus, and of the *love* which ye have to all the saints, for the *hope* which is laid up for you in heaven,"\* &c. They loved one another for the truth's sake dwelling in them.† It is this love that knits them together, and it is termed "the bond of perfectness."‡ It is Christ's new command—enforced upon them by his own example and the all-constraining influence of his death—and is essential to the Christian character.∥

5. Their unity consists in their acknowledging only *one Lord* and Master, which is Jesus Christ, their common Lord and Saviour. Him they confess as the only Sovereign and Head of the church, who hath purchased them with his own blood;§—into whose hands all power is committed in heaven and on earth;¶—and to whom, therefore, the church is bound to be subject in all things. This one Lord they confess, to the glory of God the Father, as the Lord their righteousness and strength—their sole King, Lawgiver, and Judge; acknowledging no other Lord or master in his kingdom, pursuant to his own express injunction to them: "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ."\*\*

6. The apostle enumerates among the unities of the disciples, their also having *one Baptism*: and connecting it, as he does, with their all having one *Faith*, and owning subjection to one *Lord*,††—what can this intend, but *that* baptism in *water*, which He enjoined upon his disciples, in the commission which he delivered to his

\* Col. i. 4. 5.

† 2 John i. 2.

‡ Col. iii. 14.

∥ John xiii. 34—37.

§ Acts xx. 28.

¶ Matt. xxviii. 18.

\*\* Matt. xxiii. 8—10.

†† Eph. iv. 5.

apostles before he left the earth, when he said, "Go, *teach* all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."\* In submitting to this ordinance, the believer gives a practical recognition of the authority of his Lord and Master, by whom it was instituted—confesses his faith and hope in his death, which is therein exhibited in a figure, and "puts on the Lord Jesus Christ," or publicly owns allegiance to him, as his rightful Sovereign; for baptism was designed, by the King of Zion, to be the door of admission into his visible kingdom.† Once more,—

7. The members' of Christ's mystical body, have all *one God and Father*, who is above all, as the Father of the whole family both in heaven and earth;‡ and even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, when the Saviour was about to leave the world, he said, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."|| And so we find the apostles' blessing "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,—the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation."§ He is the original source and spring of all the blessings of salvation:

"Sinners from His first love derive,  
The ground of all their Songs."

His love to a guilty world, is the fountain whence they all flow; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." It is

\* Mat. xxviii. 19, 20.

† Acts ii. 38, 41; chap. viii. 12, 37, 38; Rom. vi. 3—5; Gal. iii. 27.

‡ Eph. iii. 15. || John xx. 17.

§ 2 Cor. i. 3; chap. xi. 31; 1 Pet. i. 3.

He who hath blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ; and so all the redeemed own him as their God and Father in Christ Jesus.

Such, then, are the great Catholic Christian Unities, according to the apostolic account of the matter—the things which are essential to a real church of Christ; they were all exemplified in the churches planted by the apostles; and as real Christianity is the same in all ages, they must still be found in every society that is entitled to the name of a Christian church. The members must all have *one Spirit*; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;—they must all have *one faith*—*one hope*—*one love*, for “now abideth faith, hope, love, these three;”—they must have *one Lord*,—and *one baptism* in which they acknowledge HIM as their common Saviour, Lawgiver and King; and they must worship *one God and Father* in conjunction with the Lamb that was slain, and who hath redeemed them unto God by his blood. These Christian unities are all closely related and connected, and every one of them is dependant upon the rest; nor can a society of the saints dispense with any one of them, without incurring the divine displeasure, and forfeiting its rightful title to be called the “house of God.” But to proceed:—

The Psalmist describes the “brethren” as *dwelling together* in this unity; and this points out to us their being joined together in a visible church state. These visible societies of the people of God are called “the dwelling places of Mount Zion;” for thus runs the language of the prophet Isaiah: “The Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.”\* No doubt there is here an allusion

\* Isia. iv. 5.

to what Moses records concerning the children of Israel, when journeying through the wilderness ;—that the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light by day and night.\* And the application which the prophet makes of this to the dwelling places of Mount Zion, implies that when the Lord gathers his people, by the ministry of his word, into flocks and folds, it is that he may be unto them a sun and shield,—giving them grace and glory ; for no good thing will be withhold from those that walk uprightly.†

Now their *dwelling together* obviously implies,—

1. Their separation from the world in whatever relates to their spiritual relationship and brotherhood.—We see from the Acts of the Apostles, that whenever those ambassadors of Christ were made instrumental in calling sinners out of darkness into God's marvellous light, they always separated the disciples from the world which lieth in the wicked one, united them together in Christian fellowship among themselves, and gave them the ordinances of gospel-worship to observe, as the appointed means of glorifying God and promoting their own edification. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;” said Paul to the Corinthians, “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”‡

\* Exod. xiii. 21. † Psalm lxxxiv. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14—18.

But, further,—

2. Their dwelling together in unity implies not merely their separation from the world, but also their being united, as one body, in a visible church state, or a joint profession of the faith and hope of the Gospel; and in subjection to the one Lord, in all things whatsoever he has commanded. Much is said in the Scriptures concerning this state of things. The names given to it, show its importance. A company of believers united by the truth, and loving one another for its sake; observing the ordinances of public worship, agreeably to divine appointment; continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers;—is the *house*—the *temple*—the *church* of God—the pillar and ground of the truth—a habitation for God to dwell in by the Spirit. “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;” but this part of the subject will come more properly under consideration hereafter. At present, I only remark further on this head, that,

3. To *dwell together* evidently points out the joint residence and *settled abode* of the brethren in the church or house of God, and their connexion with one another, as members of the same house or family. To this the Psalmist alludes when he says: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.”\* And he evidently connected with this, the idea of a high state of privilege, as his next words import: “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer, in his taber-

\* Psalm xxvii. 4,

nacle, sacrifices of joy: I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.\* And thus sweetly does a modern poet sing in the same strain:—

“There would I find a settl'd rest,  
While others go and come;  
No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”

But let us now consider,—

LASTLY: The description which the Psalmist furnishes us in our text, of the blessedness connected with this state of things. He declares that it is both *good* and *pleasant*. And when he says that it is *good*, he means to intimate, that it is fraught with substantial benefit to the brethren themselves. The union, order, and ordinances of the house of God are well suited to our present state of imperfection, and absence from the Lord: and, little as some professors think of them, they are the greatest blessings we can enjoy on this side the grave, and the nearest approximation to the heavenly state. The ordinances of public worship—the word of God, whether read or preached—the prayers—the praises of the Most High—the Lord's supper, which exhibits the bread of life that came down from heaven;—these are all adapted to promote our growth in the divine life—to make us spiritually-minded, and render us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The satisfaction and enjoyment of soul which corresponds with these outward ordinances, and springs from them, is termed, by the Psalmist, the *goodness* of God's house—its *fatness*; and thus seeing God's power and glory in the sanctuary, is connected with the soul's being *filled with marrow and fatness*.† It is that manifestation which Christ promised to his obedient disciples—his joy fulfilled in themselves—the love wherewith the Father loved *him* resting upon *them*—the love of God shed abroad in the heart through the

\* Psalm xxvii. 5, 6.

† Psalm lxiii. 5.

influence of the Holy Spirit;—it is the same thing with their having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus;—in a word, it is that supping with Christ, which he promises to those that hear his voice, and open the door at his knocking.\* Its goodness is compared, in our text, to the precious ointment with which Aaron was anointed, when he was invested with the office of High Priest, on account of its agreeable savour and refreshing influence.† And so, brotherly love and unity are “a sweet savour of Christ,” and their appearance among the disciples of Jesus is an evidence that the Father hath sent him.‡ It is only while walking in this unity that we ourselves can have the enjoyment of the comforts of love—the fellowship of the Spirit—the bowels and mercies which are in Christ Jesus, and which are the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. But, further,—

This dwelling together in unity, is said also to be *pleasant*. Not only is it desirable in its nature and exercise to the soul that possesses it, but it communicates pleasure and happiness to ‘all around. So the holy oil which was poured on Aaron’s head, ran down upon his beard, and descended to the skirts of his garments; nor did it stop there, for it diffused a refreshing and delightful fragrance through all the house.

The inspired writer, moreover, compares it to the *dew* of heaven falling on Mount Hermon, and the mountains of Zion, refreshing and fructifying the earth, so as to cause it to bring forth. And so it is *love* that produces the fruits of the Gospel among the brethren of Christ—it is by love that the body of Christ is edified, and made to grow up unto Him in all things. In a word,—

\* John xiv. 21, 23; chap. xvii. 13, 26; Rom. v. 5;

1 John i. 3, 4; Rev. iii. 20.

† Exod. xxx. 25—30

‡ John xvii. 21—23.



This unity is attended with a knowledge of our personal interest in Christ, and the enjoyment of the Father's love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."\* The Lord dwells among such, as the God of love and peace, granting them refreshing tokens of his presence and special favour.† And Christ himself is in the midst of them, holding the stars in his right hand, and walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

There "the Lord commanded the blessing,"—not only of grace here, but of glory hereafter. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright; he is a rock, and there is no unrighteousness with him."‡

#### IMPROVEMENT.

Let the inhabitants of Zion appreciate their privileges, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. "They shall prosper that love thee," says the Psalmist. "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."|| It is when churches walk in the fear of the Lord, that they enjoy the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and are edified and multiplied.§

And let the disciples of Christ be taught by this subject, both their duty, and their interest also, in connecting themselves with the churches of the saints—the

\* 1 John iii. 14, 19; John xiv. 21, 23.

† 2 Cor. vi. 16, and chap. xiii. 10.

‡ Psalm xcii. 12—15; || Psalm cxxii. 6, 9.

§ Acts ix. 31.

dwelling places of Mount Zion. Many of the true disciples of Christ are still dwelling in Babylon, or Anti-christian societies; but a voice from heaven is now calling to them, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached to heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."\* Let such persons think well what they are about, in remaining in a connexion against which the awful judgments of heaven are levelled. Let them study to be found among Christ's little flock, his poor and meek subjects, whose cause shall be vindicated when he will punish the wicked;—not contending for power, and influence, and worldly greatness, but pressing after conformity to HIM, who was meek and lowly of heart.

How vast must their advantage be,  
 How great their pleasure prove,  
 Who live like brethren and consent  
 In offices of love!

True love is like that precious oil  
 Which, pour'd on Aaron's head,  
 Ran down his beard, and o'er his robes  
 Its costly moisture shed.

'Tis like refreshing dew that doth  
 On Hermon's top distil;  
 Or like the early drops, that fall  
 On Zion's fruitful hill.

For Zion is the chosen seat,  
 Where the almighty King,  
 The promis'd blessing has ordain'd,  
 And life's eternal spring.

## SERMON XVII.

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### THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST, AND THE MEANS OF THEIR EDIFICATION.

*Then had the churches rest, throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*

Acts ix. 31.

THE institution or appointment of the churches of the saints, which in the language of prophecy are termed the dwelling places of Mount Zion,—Isa. iv. 5, affords a striking proof of the wisdom, love, and care, which the chief Shepherd exercises towards the purchase of his blood—the sheep for whom he laid down his life.

By means of the glorious Gospel of his grace, the rod of his strength which he sends out of Zion, he causes them to hear his voice; to return from their wanderings to himself, “the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls,”—1 Pet. ii. 25; he gathers them into folds and flocks; and commits them to the care of under-shepherds, whom he has commanded “to feed his lambs and his sheep”—to lead them into green pastures, beside the living stream—to watch over them with paternal solicitude, and protect them from the devouring wolf. It is not his will that one, even the least of hem, should perish; and he has pledged himself to

bring them to the enjoyment of eternal life, in a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. He could, indeed, had he seen meet, have put them in possession of the inheritance immediately on their first being brought to the knowledge of the truth; but he had wise reasons for ordering it otherwise. He has a cause carrying on in this world, to the furtherance of which he makes them instrumental; and, moreover, it is his good pleasure that they should be conformed to himself in sufferings here, before they share with him in his glory. He calls upon them to take up their cross and follow him—patiently sustaining the world's hatred—running the race of faith and patience, and fighting the good fight, before they lay hold of eternal life—and in this way he makes them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But he knows that, while they are in this world, they are in an enemy's country, like Israel in the wilderness; and his love towards them is manifested in the provision he has made for their perseverance in faith and holiness—for their comfort and joy—and the nourishing up of their souls unto eternal life. It is here that his wisdom more strikingly appears in the institution of churches, in which the word of life is to be held forth—the unadulterated milk on which his children feed, as new-born babes are nourished by means of the mother's breast. In the churches, he has planted his ordinances, as so many “wells of salvation,”—Isa. xii. 3. There he establishes his throne and sways his sceptre over a willing people; there he manifests his special presence among his subjects, dispensing, in rich abundance, the blessings of his grace; and there he calls upon his disciples to wait upon him, that he may restore comforts to the mourner—renew the strength of the fainting soul—relieve the tempted and distressed—and supply their every need, according to his riches in glory, and their various circumstances.

To churches scripturally constituted, the history of the

Acts of the Apostles must always be a most interesting portion of the sacred writings. Here they learn what Christianity was in its pure and most perfect state, and before it became corrupted by the wisdom of man. Here they learn the law of the Lord's house, and trace the footsteps of the flock; and here they learn how the world stands affected towards the doctrine of the cross.

A violent persecution had arisen against the church at Jerusalem, in consequence of which, the greater part of its members were scattered abroad; but, "they went every where preaching the word"—the arm of the Lord was revealed—multitudes, hearing the good news of salvation, believed and were baptized; and churches were formed "throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria." At the time referred to in our text, external persecution had generally ceased—"the churches had rest," and the brethren "were edified," and thus "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

Brethren, there is much profitable instruction conveyed to us in these words. Allow me to call your attention to the subject on the present occasion, while I endeavour to illustrate a few of the principal things contained in them.

FIRST—We are here reminded of one important end for which Christian churches are formed—it is the *Edification* of the disciples. And, SECONDLY, we are also reminded of some things which go hand in hand with this edification, and are essential to it, viz. walking in the *fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.*

I. We learn from the words of the text, that one important end of the union of Christians in a church-state, is *the edification of the disciples.*

By *edification*, generally, I understand the establishment of the souls of the disciples in the knowledge and

belief of the truth, in opposition to their being tossed about by every wind of doctrine. It imports their making progress in the divine life, and growing in all the fruits of the Spirit, such as—faith, hope, love, joy, peace, and so forth. It implies their advancing from the state of babes to that of young men, and from that of young men to that of fathers in Christ, a distinction which, you may recollect, the apostle John makes use of,—1 John ii. 12—14. Paul bewailed the state of the Hebrews,—ch. v. 12—14, whose progress had not kept pace with the privileges of religious instruction which they had enjoyed—so that, when for the time they ought to have been teachers of others, they had need themselves to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God—they were become such as had need of milk and not of strong meat—they were “unskilful in the word of righteousness.” The case was much the same with the Corinthian church, of whom the same apostle laments, that he could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto babes in Christ. He had fed them with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto they had not been able to bear it,—1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

But the term *edification* is frequently applied to the disciples of Christ in their social capacity *as a church*. And this is perfectly consistent with its etymology; for, the primary meaning of the word *edify*, is, to build up—answerable to which, a church is termed God’s building, house, or temple. Of this spiritual house or temple, the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation, or chief corner-stone, laid by the doctrine of the apostles and prophets. He is that “living stone” which God hath laid in Zion, or the true church, and on which she is founded—and believers in Him are consequently spoken of as “lively stones,” built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,—1 Pet. ii. 5; Heb. iii. 6.

But the most striking illustration of the matter, now under consideration, is contained in Eph. iv., where the

apostle discusses the subject of *edification* under both the views that I have mentioned—viz., first, as relating to individuals, and then to a whole church, or the body of Christ. In verses 4—6, he presents us with a beautiful description of a Christian church—then he proceeds to specify the gifts which Christ, its glorified head, bestows upon the members of his mystical body, ver. 7—11. In the following verses, he explains, particularly, the gracious end and design for which these gifts are bestowed, viz. “the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and *the edifying* of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” And he shows how this important end is effected, in ver. 15: it is by their “speaking the truth in love, that they may grow up into Christ in all things, who is their head, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.” No language can place the subject in a more luminous point of view than is done by the apostle in this chapter. He teaches Christians the end of their union and fellowship in the Gospel, and the important object they should ever have in view in their social intercourse as the citizens of Zion, in attending upon all the ordinances of public worship. They are taught the duty of constant prayer to the Father of lights, that this great end may be gained by each one individually, and by the whole body collectively—that they may stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, “holding forth the word of life,” and “walking worthy of the vocation with which they are called in all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” It is in

this way they come to know, experimentally, “how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”—that there are consolations in Christ, the comforts of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the bowels and mercies, of which the apostle reminds the Philippians,—chap. ii. 1. But, we come now,—

II. To consider some things mentioned in the text, which have an intimate connexion with the edification of the disciples in their social state. We are told that these churches *walked in the fear of the Lord*—enjoying the *comforts of the Holy Spirit*. Let us attend to each of these in its order.

I. *The fear of the Lord* is a phrase of extensive import. Generally, it denotes a reverential awe and dread of the divine majesty; for “God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him.” “Holy and reverend is his name.” Hence the language of the prophet Isaiah: “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread,”—Isa. viii. 12, 13. So likewise the apostle exhorts the Hebrews: “Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire,”—chap. xii. 28, 29.

But the phrase, “the fear of the Lord,” is often used, in the inspired writings, to denote the whole worship and service of God. Thus the Psalmist: “Blessed is the man that *feareth* the Lord; that *delighteth* greatly in his commandments,”—Psalm cxii. 1. Again: “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name: for thou only art holy? for all nations shall come and *worship* before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest,”—Rev. xv. 4. But it will not be improper here to analyze the fear of the Lord, according to its scriptural import, and show its component parts; for this will be found the best method of illustrating the subject.



1. Then, I observe, that “the fear of the Lord,” must necessarily include in it, *the knowledge of his true character*. This is evidently the basis of all true religion: for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” as we are repeatedly told in the word of God,—Psalm cx. 10; Prov. i. 10; chap. ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28. We cannot properly be said to fear him, whilst we are ignorant of his character. False views and impressions of him may produce idolatry, superstition, or profaneness; but if our knowledge of God be correct, it will regulate our dispositions and conduct towards him. The world by all its boasted wisdom knew not God. Even the polished Athenians, who, in the days of the apostles, had carried the study of philosophy and the arts, to the *acme* of perfection, worshipped *an unknown God*,—Acts xvii. 13. Such was the moral darkness in which they were enveloped, that they were unable to trace out his character from the works of Creation and Providence. It is in the Gospel alone that his *whole* name is unfolded; it is in the face of his beloved Son that his glory beams forth upon us, as the just God and the Saviour; and it is a discovery of this that excites in the mind the true scriptural fear of the Lord. This leads me further to observe, that,

2. The fear of the Lord includes in it a superlative *love and esteem* of his glorious character.

We all know that love is promoted or excited in our hearts, by what we perceive to be amiable in itself, and beneficial to us. Now the Gospel presents the blessed God to our view under both these endearing aspects. It exhibits to us all his other perfections as exercised in harmony with his mercy towards the guilty—and this reconciles our minds to every part of his character, which the apostle John sums up in “LOVE”—and this draws out our supreme affection towards him, which is the law written in our hearts, and is itself the sum of holiness; corresponding with what

the same apostle remarks, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him,"—1 John iv. 16.

3. The fear of the Lord certainly includes in it *a holy and reverential awe of the divine Majesty*; and, indeed, it is from this ingredient that it takes its designation. But, then, it is not that slavish dread of Him which is inconsistent with loving him, and delighting in his character. Such a fear would necessarily unfit us for obedience; and instead of delighting in him, would prompt us to flee from his presence, as our first parents did on their fall, and before they had received a revelation of his mercy. The true fear of the Lord is a filial awe and reverence arising out of the knowledge and love of God; and, wherever it takes possession of the mind, it never fails to produce an abiding impression of the infinite greatness, the justice, and the holiness of God, and also of our own meanness, insufficiency, and vileness in his sight, mingled with a deep impression of his infinite grace and condescension towards us in Christ Jesus. This produces a mixture of profound reverence, self-abasement, and holy confidence. It produces tenderness of conscience, and makes the subject of it cautious of every thing that would incur the divine displeasure, or interrupt the enjoyment of the divine favour. To which permit me to add,—

4. That walking in the fear of the Lord, implies a conscientious *regard to all his commands*.

The commandments and institutions of the Lord are expressly termed his fear: "Come, ye children, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord,"—Psalm xxxiv. 11. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that *do his commandments*,"—Psalm cxi. 10. Hence we infer that the true fear of the Lord is manifested in doing his will—in obeying and serving him, whence it is expressed in *doing his commandments*. And this stands opposed to their observing the commandments of men in whatever relates to his worship—a thing pointedly con-

demned in the word of God, however little it be thought of by professors in general in our day. You all remember how the Lord complained of Israel of old: "Their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men:" and again; "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In short, the true fear of the Lord will lead to a conscientious observance of *all things* whatsoever Christ hath commanded, without excepting any of them. Whenever it prevails in the mind, it gives weight and authority to everything he says, so that the conscience becomes bound by it, nor dare the subject of it break one of the least of Christ's commands,—Matt. v. 19. The true fearer of the Lord "trembles at his word"—he listens to it as the word of his Creator and Judge, stamped with his authority; and this leads him to regard every, even the least, of his commands as being the effect of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness; so that he dare not trifle with any of them. His language is: "I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

It was thus that the churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, habitually *walked* in the fear of the Lord, and were edified—that is, they were built up as so many holy temples, or habitations for God to dwell in through the Spirit; and it is added, they enjoyed *the comforts of the Holy Ghost*. Need I tell you, my brethren, that there is a connexion, an indissoluble connexion, between these two things—between walking habitually in the fear of the Lord, manifesting a dutiful obedience to all his commands—and enjoying the comforts of the Holy Spirit? It may possibly perplex some to make out this connexion; yet the word of God states it and insists upon it; nor are there any two things in nature more inseparably connected. Let us take the present opportunity of examining the Scriptures on the point.

You remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ drew

towards the close of his public ministry, and was about to leave the world, he consoled the minds of his sorrowing disciples, by promising that he would not leave them as orphans or comfortless, but that he would intercede for them with the Father, who should bestow upon them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever,—John xiv. 16—18. He then proceeds to explain what he meant by this Comforter; for he adds, in verse 26,—“The Comforter is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The subject is resumed by our Lord, at ver. 26 of the following chapter, in these words: “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,”—John xv. 26; and still more particularly in chap. 16, where he enlarges upon the office and operations of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth—the Comforter,—ver. 7—16.

Now, from the whole of our Lord's doctrine on this subject, I conceive we are clearly taught two things, concerning the work of the Holy Spirit; namely, that his office, in the economy of redemption, is, *first*, to reconcile enemies; and *secondly*, to comfort the hearts of the disciples. By convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, he reconciles the hearts of men to the doctrine of the cross, and to the character of God therein made known; thus he glorifies the Saviour by taking of the things which are *his*, and displaying his glorious grace to the guilty; and then he acts as the Comforter, pouring into the hearts of the disciples the love of God, filling them with all peace and joy in believing, and causing them to abound in the hope of eternal life. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth, when he persuades men to believe it; and he bears witness to its genuine effects, when he comforts those who obey it.

If you read, with attention, our Lord's discourse concerning the Holy Spirit, of which we have a record in the fourteenth and two following chapters of John's Gospel, you cannot fail to perceive how he connects the consolations of the Holy Spirit, with the keeping of his commands, and especially his new command of brotherly love. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," says he, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him,"—John xiv. 31.—"If ye keep my commands, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full,"—chap. xv. 10, 11. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you,"—ver. 12. From these and many other scripture testimonies, it is evident, that to have the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter, and earnest of the heavenly inheritance, is an attainment peculiar to those who know, believe, and love the saving truth, and who are consequently led to obey it from the heart. Walking in the ways of the Lord, they have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, and come to know their personal interest in the Saviour's death—that Christ loved *them*, and gave himself for *them*. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; and concerning such the apostle adds: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." Thus love is crowned with enjoyment.

But, then, the highest manifestations of the love of God are ever accompanied by the deepest impressions of his fear. This fact you may see exemplified in various instances recorded in the holy Scriptures. Recollect the case of the patriarch Abraham. He was emphatically termed, "the friend of God," and admitted to the freest and most unreserved intercourse with him;—yet in all these instances we see him che-

rishing upon his spirit, an abiding impression of his fear, considering himself but as dust and ashes before him. Call to mind the case of Job, when God condescended to enter into familiar conversation with him: "I have heard of thee by the earing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." How was it with the prophet Isaiah? When he got a glimpse of the Lord in his heavenly temple, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and heard the Seraphim crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts"—he shrunk into insignificance in his own eyes, exclaiming, "I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,"—chap. vi. Look at the prayer of Daniel, contained in the ninth chapter of his prophecy—mark what confession of sin is there, what humiliation of soul, mingled with reverential awe of the "great and dreadful God, who keepeth covenant and sheweth mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments." See how it was with the apostles on the holy mount, when they were favoured with a beatific vision of the Lord in his glorified state, and heard a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." It is recorded, that when the disciples heard it, "they fell on their face and were sore afraid." It was so with John, the beloved disciple, when Christ appeared to him in the isle of Patmos. "When I saw him," says he, "I fell at his feet as dead,"—Rev. i. 17. Nor was the case otherwise with Christ himself in the days of his flesh; for though he had the fullest enjoyment of his Father's love, yet with what profound reverence do we find him ever treating his character and perfections. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."—"Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as

we are one.”—“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.” Thus, “in the days of his flesh, He who was the beloved Son of God, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard *in that he feared*,”—Heb. v. 7. But enough, I hope, has been said, to evince the truth of the doctrine, that there is an inseparable connexion between walking in the fear of the Lord, and enjoying the consolations of the Holy Spirit, as we are told was the case with the Christian churches mentioned in the text. What, then, are the inferences; what the IMPROVEMENT—that we should make of the subject?

May we not learn from it a useful lesson, in the way of correcting various errors into which we are prone to run, respecting the prosperity of a Christian church? How common is it with us to think and to say, when a church encreases its numbers, “how prosperously that church is going on!” forgetting that churches which have been hastily gathered, have often been more hastily scattered. The *real* prosperity of a church does not depend upon its numbers, but upon the materials of which the spiritual building is composed—upon their being “lively stones,” the genuine disciples of Christ—their having one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, one hope of their calling—and so keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It depends upon their all speaking the same thing, having no schisms among them, but being perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment—walking under the influence of the truth, and heartily loving one another for the truth’s sake, and submitting themselves one to another in the fear of the Lord—following after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

And now, my beloved brethren, the members of this Christian church, allow me, as a *practical application* of the subject we have had under consideration, to direct your attention to the apostle Paul's advice to the church at Corinth, in which he takes his affectionate leave of them. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you,"—2 Cor. xiii. 11. The holy apostle had given the brethren at Corinth many useful lessons in the course of his two epistles, and much salutary advice regarding the ends of their union; and, in this short sentence, he reduces the whole of what he had said, to a kind of abstract, compendium, or summary. Wishing them all manner of peace and joy, of prosperity and happiness; and having thus far unbosomed his heart, he directs them to that line of conduct, in their social capacity, which, if followed out by the whole body, could not fail to ensure the blessing of heaven as their portion. Let us not dismiss it hastily, for it is a subject which interests *us*, not less than it did the church at Corinth.

"Be perfect,"—and this exhortation, addressed as it is to a church, imports that they should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," in opposition to there being schisms and divisions among them, of which he had complained at the outset of his first epistle,—chap. i. 11, 12. He would have every member to occupy the place assigned it in the body; so that the hand should not usurp the place of the head, nor the feet that of the eyes, as he explains himself, in chap. xii. of the same epistle. And certain it is, that very much of the happiness of a church depends on every one of the members, keeping his place in the body: nor can any church prosper where this is neglected.

"Be of good comfort"—in other words, encourage yourselves and one another with the salutary truths and promises of the Gospel, by duly recollecting them, and



reminding one another of them. There is enough in them to fill us all with joy and peace in believing, and even to administer everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. They are divinely calculated to support us under every conflict and trial, and encourage us to abound in the work of the Lord. Hence this same apostle exhorts the brethren at Philippi, to "rejoice in the Lord alway,—chap. iv. 4; and the Thessalonians, to "rejoice evermore,"—1 Thess. v. 16.

"Be of one mind"—in whatever relates to the faith and obedience of the Gospel. Cultivate mutual love and affection for the truth's sake, having one and the same object of pursuit, one aim and purpose of heart. And beware of boasting of your liberty to differ; for truth is one, and all differences about it must be caused by a departure from it: the Spirit of God does not teach contrary things. What an example of this unity of judgment and affection have we in the church at Jerusalem, of whom it is recorded, that "the multitude of those that believed were of one heart and of one soul,"—Acts iv. 32.

"Live in peace"—which stands opposed to their giving place to strife, and division, and angry contention. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and all evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." To live in peace, we must have our hearts seasoned with the Gospel of peace; we must let the peace of God ever rule within them; and cultivate humility, meekness, charity, patience, and long-suffering. Peace is the element in which the subjects of the Prince of Peace should live, and move, and breathe—following after the things that make for peace, both among themselves and others—for God hath reconciled them unto himself, and called them to peace. The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace: and "blessed are the

peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God,"—Matt. v. 9.

Such are the important duties to which the apostle exhorts his Christian brethren;—and now turn your attention for a moment to the motives and encouragements, by which they are enforced.

"The God of love and peace shall be with you." There is surely something in the highest degree interesting to such creatures as we are, in the view which the apostle here gives us of the character of the blessed God—"the God of love and of peace." Unquestionably, he is a Being of inflexible truth and holiness—of strict justice, and infinite opposition to evil. "Holy and reverend is his name." Yet in the Gospel of his Son, he eminently appears as "the God of love and of peace." "God is love," says the apostle John; "and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." But he is also termed "the God of peace," or peaceful God,—Heb. xiii. 20. He is the author and approver of peace. He fills the souls of his people with joy and peace in believing, and unites them in peace and love with each other. Thus he is the author of peace in all the churches of the saints,—1 Cor. xiv. 33. And this is the endearing view of the divine character which the apostle brings prominently forward, and presses upon the consideration of the disciples of Christ, as an encouragement to them to cultivate a unity of judgment and affection, and to live in peace and harmony: "The God of love and peace shall be with you."

Churches that walk in godly fear  
 Shall rest, and peace, and comfort know,  
 In Jesus' dying love;  
 Whose rising pow'r will bright appear,  
 When saints in grace and numbers grow,  
 Fed by the Heav'nly Dove.

## SERMON XVIII.

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### ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

*Let brotherly love continue.*

Heb. xiii. 1.

THE duty enjoined in this short, but comprehensive, exhortation, was remarkably exemplified in the church at Jerusalem for some time after its first establishment. We have the proof in Acts ii. 44, &c. ; and chap. iv. 32, &c. It is there recorded that “all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need;”—“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul.” When the apostle Paul addressed this epistle to that church, a considerable space of time had intervened, and many trying circumstances had occurred, which had unhappily put their confidence to the test, and cooled the ardour of their Christian affection. Among these may be mentioned the severe persecutions which they had been called to endure, and which required the exercise of patience,—See chap. x. 32—36. Another thing was the influence of corrupt teaching, by men who sought to detach them from the Gospel, and lead them back to Judaism. At the close of chap. xii. the apostle had been reminding them of the abrogation of the old covenant and the establish-

ment of the new, or the kingdom of Christ, in its place. From this he takes occasion to exhort them to "hold fast the grace, whereby they might serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear," which he enforces from the consideration, that the Being whose free unmerited favour to the worthless and the miserable is so gloriously displayed in the Gospel, is "a consuming fire"—jealous of the honour of his grace. And then follows the exhortation,—"*Let brotherly love continue.*" I shall: I.—Explain the duty—the *nature* of the love spoken of. II.—Show *how* this love should manifest itself in a church. III.—Advert to some things which are apt to arise among brethren, and are calculated to impede its operation. IV.—Enforce the exhortation, by showing its high importance.

I. The nature of the love here enjoined, is sufficiently pointed out by the apostle, when he terms it *brotherly* love. It is not that love which subsists between husband and wife, parents and children, or the offspring of the same family, considered as such. It is the love that is due to the brethren of Christ, who are also the Christian brotherhood—the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, adopted into the family of heaven, and so "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

To illustrate this point a little, I would observe that all mankind are in one respect brethren. Created by the same Almighty Hand—descended from the same original parent stock—partaking of the same common nature—endowed with similar passions and affections—subject to the same wants and infirmities, and consequently having a mutual interest in each other's welfare—the law of God enforces upon us the duty of reciprocal benevolence, and of loving our neighbour as we love ourselves: but this is not the specific duty enjoined in my text.

Further: persons of the same family—of the same

tribe—or of the same country—are sometimes termed brethren, in scripture, and it is plain that there is a peculiar degree of affection and kindness due to such, arising from that consideration. This was the case with ancient Israel; they were all the seed of Abraham, brethren according to the flesh, and, therefore, under especial obligations to show kindness to each other on that account. To corroborate what I have now said, I need only remind you, that in the law of Moses it is repeatedly enjoined upon that people to exercise benevolence towards such as were Jews by nature, and stood in need of their sympathy and assistance, on the ground of that very relationship—the tie of consanguinity. And, observe, I beseech you, how the apostle Paul enforces the same duty on Christians, when he says: “If any provide not *for his own*, and specially for those of his own house, (or kindred, as the margin has it,) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,”—1 Tim. v. 8. But neither is this the love enjoined by the apostle in the words of the text. It is the love of Christian brethren,—it is a new and spiritual relationship, founded in regeneration and adoption, whereby we become born again—“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” For, of his own will, he begets his children again by means of the word of truth. In virtue of this new birth, those who were, by nature, children of wrath, become the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus—are adopted into his family, and enjoy the privileges of Sonship,—John i. 12. Thus are their “souls purified by obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; and they are led to love one another with pure hearts fervently,”—1 Pet. i. 23. From this we may see, how the love enjoined in our text, stands distinguished from that affection which we owe to our fellow creatures at large, and to our kindred according to the flesh—both of which are duties founded on the law of nature and of

consanguinity. But the love in question takes its rise from the new nature implanted in regeneration, and is founded upon the truth which we believe; for it is “love for the truth’s sake which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever;” and it corresponds with our Lord’s new commandment,—John xiii. 34, as shall be afterwards shown. Let us now proceed,—

II. To consider *how* this love manifests itself among brethren united together in the profession of Christ’s name. It is unnecessary to take up your time in proving, that love is an operative principle, and that, whenever it takes possession of the heart, it will not fail to lead to active exertions in promoting the happiness of its objects.

1. I may remark, that as the *truth* is the ground of this love, and the centre of its joy, so we may be certain, that it will not render its subjects blind to what is really sinful in the conduct of each other; on the contrary, it will shew itself by faithfulness in reproofing whatever is amiss, knowing that sin must ever endanger the interests of the soul. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart,” says the divine law—“thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him,”—Lev. xix. 17. Yet we are taught, that “Charity will cover the multitude of sins;” that is, such imperfections and blemishes as we are all more or less liable to in this mortal state. Christian love has no pleasure in scrutinizing the faults of others; and though it will be pained and grieved when these things do occur, it will be anxious for their removal, and be prompt to forgive when the fault is confessed.

2. Love among brethren will manifest itself by bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ. Sympathy under trials of any kind is a necessary ingredient in Christian love, which leads us to “weep with those that weep,” as well as to “rejoice with those that do rejoice;”—to be of the same mind

one towards another. Stoical indifference is very opposite to brotherly love. An unfeeling professor has nothing of the mind of Christ about him. Need I remind you of *his* tears at the grave of Lazarus—his compassion on the multitude, when he saw them fainting and scattered as sheep without a shepherd—his weeping over Jerusalem, when he contemplated its approaching doom. And above all, recollect what his love to his guilty people led him to undergo in their stead, when “he bore their griefs, and carried their sorrows”—when he hid not his face from shame and spitting—but, as the good Shepherd, laid down his life for the sheep. This was pure, active, beneficent, disinterested love; it was full of mercy and good fruits; and this is the love that he calls all his disciples to imitate. If our love be unfeigned and without dissimulation, it will partake of something of the nature and properties of the Saviour’s love. He is still touched with a feeling of our infirmities—he still has compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out of the way. But,—

3. When enforcing the duty of brotherly love, the apostles insist much upon the exercise of benevolence, in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, distributing to the necessity of saints; and these things are always held forth as the most substantial proofs of love. “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, “be thou warmed and filled,” notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body, what doth it ¶profit?” In what estimation these fruits of love are held by the Saviour, we cannot be ignorant, if we have read the New Testament with attention, and particularly the twenty-fifth of Matthew. Let this love then appear in our readiness to minister to the necessity of

saints—being given to hospitality. “To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—“As we have opportunity, we should do good unto all men;” but our Christian brethren, “the household of faith,” claim our first regard; and concerning them we are told, that a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, shall not lose its reward.

4. These, brethren, appear to be some of the principal manifestations of love among those who are united upon the truth; but I would take leave to remark further, that where love is genuine, and founded upon scripture principles, it will not fail to show itself by its *complacency in the brethren*—esteeming them as our companions in the way to Zion—delighting in their society, and preferring it to that of others who are not like-minded with us—and studying, by every prudent and scriptural method, to promote their comfort and joy. There is nothing sour, morose, or churlish, in genuine Christian love—on the contrary, it is kind and conciliating—it is free and unreserved—confiding and communicative. It prompts to a free and social intercourse among the brethren, and is not to be controlled by those forms and ceremonies, and distinctions of rank, and modes of etiquette, which obtain in the kingdoms of this world, and which, alas, have too much influence in societies professing to follow in the footsteps of the flock. Our Lord tells his disciples, that he would have their mutual love displayed so conspicuously, as that all men should know them by it—that is, should distinguish them by it as belonging to *his family*, in contradistinction from their being *of the world*. Now I am sure it must strike us all, upon mature reflection, that there ought to be something very much out of the ordinary course of things to answer this end. We can find traces of benevolence among uncultivated savages; instinct and natural affection prompt to its exercise. The love which distinguishes Christians from



the world, must surely be something widely different from the bare exercise of pity to the afflicted, or showing kindness to the distressed. And yet, if we impartially examine the state of things among the generality of the dissenting churches of the present day, can it in truth be said, that the exercise of love among them rises higher than what is to be found in the church of England—in the church of Scotland—in the church of Rome, or among those who make no profession of religion? Where among them shall be found that complacency with each other—that free and unreserved intercourse—that mutual sympathy and fellow-feeling which marked the conduct of the first Christians, and compelled their enemies to say, “See how these Christians love one another!” Brethren, I throw out these remarks for your consideration, hoping they will be received with candour, and that we shall all take a lesson from them. I come now,—

III. To advert to some things which are occasionally found among the brethren, and which when they do appear, are apt to impede the circulation of brotherly love. And the first thing I mention under this head is—*Pride*. This temper of mind is the very bane of charity, or love; and, indeed, is placed by the apostle Paul in the way of contrast to it, when he says,—“Charity vaunteth not itself—is not puffed up.” The schisms which rent the church of Corinth, originated in the indulgence of pride. There were in that church, men of proud spirits, who were possessed of the “knowledge which puffeth up.” Pride naturally prompts men to aspire after pre-eminence—it inspires a fondness for taking the lead—it despises instruction—it cannot brook control or reproof—it disdains to yield, and spurns at subjection—nor is it at all an uncommon thing to find it associated with conceited ignorance. The apostle Paul, you may remember, connects these two things together, when writing to Timothy: “He is *proud, knowing*

*nothing*," says he,—1 Tim. vi. 3—5. This temper of mind will sacrifice every thing to its gratification, and it can love none but those who are subservient to it.

One of the most striking effects of pride is, that *spirit of independence* which some adopt as a principle; and as they would fain persuade us, from conscience, under the pretext of being subject to Christ alone, in opposition to the authority of men. It was thus among the Corinthians: some of them said, "I am for Christ"—and that in opposition to their being of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, as if these latter were not for Christ also! And under this proud temper, they would think themselves justified in their opposition to the servants of Christ, while they supposed themselves adhering to the Saviour alone! Could there be a greater delusion? But whatever fair appearances such a disposition may assume, it is a fruitful source of disunion, division, and discord in a church—the very bane of brotherly love; and I mention it, in order to put the brethren upon their guard against it. Its influence is to set the members of the body independent of one another, and its language is: "I have no need of you." It leads those who are the unhappy subjects of it to despise the beautiful order and subordination which Christ hath appointed in his house,—Heb. xiii. 17. Individuals of this proud spirit of independence know not what it is to "submit themselves one to another in the fear of God,"—Eph. v. 21; nor to be "all of them subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility,"—1 Pet. v. 5. But, to proceed:—

Another thing which I may mention as very injurious to the circulation of charity among brethren is, the *spirit of Envy*, which always shows a deficiency in love, for "Charity envieth not." This hateful temper prompts persons to undervalue and even to repine at the gifts bestowed on their brethren, the usefulness with which they are crowned, or the esteem that is paid them. "Wrath is cruel," says the wise man, "and

anger is outrageous: but who can stand before envy?" As if he should say, the former two are bad enough, but they are not to be compared to the latter—it is "the rottenness of the bones." Let us ever be upon our guard against this malignant temper; and if at any time we should unhappily feel any thing akin to it rising in our bosoms, let us check it in the bud, by summoning to our aid the principles of the Gospel. Think of Moses, when some officious person came and told him, that certain individuals were prophesying in the camp of Israel, and even Joshua requested him to interpose his veto; what was his reply: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that God would put his Spirit upon them!" Let us never forget, that *envy* "ranks among the works of the flesh," which the followers of Christ are to mortify.

I must mention to you one thing more as having a powerful tendency to obstruct the free circulation of love among brethren in a church, and that is the prevalence of *particular attachments*, founded on principles aside from the truth, their common ground of union. This leads to partiality in our judgment, and sometimes prompts us to gloss over things, in the conduct of our partisans, that are highly blameable. These party attachments are not always confined to leaders or to gifts, as in the church of Corinth; but are frequently founded upon other grounds—such as family connections, similarity of circumstances, education, manners, and disposition—particular habits of familiarity, friendship, or intimacy. This is always dangerous, and often pernicious in its effects in a church. It contracts the mind, and hinders that diffusive charity for the truth's sake, which ought to pervade the whole body, where "the members should have the same care one of another." It divides the one body into different parties, according to their several attachments; and as these are not founded on the truth, but might have subsisted without it, they frequently end in

schisms, when any of the individuals come to be the subjects of discipline in a Christian church. Let us be upon our guard against these things, and avoid them, if we wish the peace and prosperity of Zion, and remember that, in the affairs of religion, we are to know no man after the flesh,—Mark iii. 31—35; 2 Cor. v. 16.

I have mentioned pride, envy, and party attachments, as things that are most inimical to the free circulation of love among brethren, and these I must contend are exceedingly baneful in their operation; but it would be easy to add to this catalogue, and specify other things equally prejudicial to charity, did my limits permit. I might mention, for instance, *fondness for singularity*, which indeed is often the effect of pride and a love of distinction. It is no uncommon thing to meet with individuals who, to render themselves persons of consequence in a church, find it the easiest method of attaining their end, to strike out some new hypothesis, or to contend for some practice, such for instance as the marked separation scheme, according to which, they can offer up prayer to God with none but the members of their own church—they can go into no place of worship, except that to which they belong—or if, perchance, any circumstances should lead them into another place, they must not appear to take any part in the worship—even the entrance into any other place is, according to some, to commit *spiritual fornication!*—with other similar extravagancies.

Now things of this kind, which I do but hint at, are mere eccentricities—they have no foundation in the Scriptures—they originate in a bad state of the heart and affections, *a want of satisfaction in the Truth*—they are things which do not tend to peace, harmony, and godly edifying, but rather to minister questions of strife. And yet it is remarkable, that the individuals who are carried away with them, are often the first to complain of the deficiency of charity in a church. Alas! how little do such persons know of themselves. They seem

never to suspect, that these things originate in a *deficiency* of love *in themselves*; and though they would have us believe, that they are the offspring of charity, and of a zeal for the purity of the Christian profession, the fallacy of such pretexts is easily exposed. True love has no pleasure in widening differences among brethren; on the contrary, it always manifests itself by a contrary temper—by conciliation, and following after the things that make for peace and mutual edification. See its character delineated by the apostle Paul,—1 Cor. xiii,—“Charity suffereth long and is kind—charity envieth not—vaunteth not itself—is not puffed up—doth not behave itself unseemly—seeketh not her own—is not easily provoked—thinketh no evil—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things—believeth all things—hopeth all things—endureth all things.”

This, brethren, is the spirit of Christian love, and I appeal to you, whether it be not very opposite to that temper of mind which manifests itself in that class of persons to whom I have referred. The apostle enjoins it upon Christian brethren to *forbear one another in love*. Now this very exhortation implies, that differences of mind and judgment will always be found among the members of Christian churches; not, indeed, respecting the truth itself, but on such points as I have referred to, and it calls upon us for the exercise of *forbearance* in regard to such things. But, alas, how little of this forbearance is to be found among those persons who strike out differences, which have no foundation in scripture! Let us not imitate their conduct in this particular; but rather let it be our study to exercise that forbearance towards them, which they are so little disposed to exercise towards us, who cannot subscribe to their dogmas.

IV. I come now, in the last place, to enforce the exhortation in the text, by shewing its vast importance.

1. The duty there enjoined comes to us not only by the

authority of the Holy Spirit of love, speaking by the apostle, but also of our Lord and Master, to whom the same Spirit was given without measure. It is his new command, delivered to his disciples just before he suffered, and enforced, too, not merely by his authority as Lord, Lawgiver, and King, but by the powerful motive of his own love to them. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also should love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,"—John xiii. 34, 35. A duty so recommended demands our most implicit and dutiful regard. For why call we him, Lord, while we do not the things which he enjoins? Never let us forget, that obedience to this command is the surest test of our discipleship; and without it, all our professions are vain. "Hereby perceive we the love of Christ, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,"—1 John iii. 16. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God: He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love,"—chap. iv. 7, 8. This love is not only an evidence to others, but it is also an evidence to our own consciences, that we are the disciples of the Saviour. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,"—chap. iii. 14. And, by the fruits of this love, will Christ distinguish his people, in the day of judgment, from all false professors,—Matt. xxv.

2. As I have just called your attention to the Saviour's new command of brotherly love, in which he sets before them his own example as the pattern for their imitation, it can neither be improper nor unprofitable to dwell a little upon His vast love, to take a nearer survey of the subject, and to consider a few of its distinguishing properties. The subject, you see, is the love which Christ himself manifested towards his guilty people. But what can we say of it? The mind shrinks

from any attempt to describe it. An apostle has declared, that it is not only unspeakable, but that it passes knowledge. We feel that whatever we say, must disparage it. It transcends all description, for it transcends all thought. No love that we can conceive of comes near it. No love that is to be found in any creature, will bear to be compared with it. And this Christ himself felt; for observe, that, in order to find a love resembling it, he searched the whole creation in vain, and, having done so, he was obliged to look into the unfathomable mind of the boundless God to meet with its parallel. "As the Father hath loved me," says the gracious Saviour, "so have I loved you." As though he should say; My Father's love is the only measure I can give you of mine—and it is not his love to the holy angels, but his love to *me*, his only begotten, his dearly beloved Son. Still, however, we do know something of this love, though we can never know it all.

Remember how *free* and *disinterested* this love was. We did not merit it—we did not ask for it—we did not even desire it. And this is one wonderful property of it. It is love that found nothing to draw it forth. It was entirely self-moved. We are as unable to discover a reason for it, as we are to discover the beginning of eternity. If, therefore, we would imitate it, disinterestedness must be one main ingredient in the love we bear to our Christian brethren. If it resembles Christ's love to his people, it will flow freely and spontaneously—not waiting to be bought or won—but attracted by the Truth, as we see it dwelling in them.

And then think how *costly*, too, was the love of Christ! Conceive of it, if you can, as first rising in his mind. What mountains of difficulties were in its way! To carry this love into full operation, "He who was rich, in immortal glory, must, for his people's sakes, be made poor." He must pay the price of redemption which the law demanded. But what a price!

We talk of it, but none except himself can understand its amount. The Prince of Life, the Maker and Supporter of the universe, must become man, and when man, walk upon our earth! The Lord of glory must be made a curse, expiring on a gibbet, as a malefactor, and then be laid in a grave. We may think, and think, and think again; but here is something that baffles thought. We are lost and overwhelmed in its depths. Who can think of Bethlehem, and Gethsemane, and Calvary,—the manger, and the garden, and the cross,—and not wonder at his own selfishness? But,—

Consider, further, how *tender* and *compassionate* was the love of Christ! While contemplating its greatness, we often lose sight of these features of it. We can hardly conceive that an affection so strong can stoop to be tender. But the softness of a mother's love never equalled that of our adorable Redeemer's. Read his life, and you will see his compassion every where appear. Turn only to his last interview with his disciples. He was within a step of his bloody cross and passion. All the terrors of his last conflict were rushing in upon him. Yet mark the consolatory tenor of his discourse—and especially note in his last prayer, John xvii. So mindful is he of the sorrowful condition of his disciples, that he seems to forget his own. And this is the point in which the love of many of his professed followers forms a striking contrast to the divine pattern which he has given them;—here it is that their love is most deficient. It is not compassionate—it is not tender—it does not resemble “the bowels of Jesus Christ.” And, then, think once more,—

How *bountiful* and *extensive* was the Saviour's love to his people! To have a view of this, we must think of what they were, and to what they lay exposed, and contrast that with what his love has done for them. He found them wretched and miserable, poor and naked; but he has rescued them from the jaws of hell, from the abyss of wo,—and he has clothed and



adorned the outcasts, and loaded them with riches, and honoured them more than the angels that never sinned. Well might he say, "Love ye one another, as I have loved you." "Freely ye have received, freely give."

To sum up shortly what hath been hinted at on this part of the subject, we may take these as the chief points in which our love for our Christian brethren should resemble the love of Christ to us. His was free—let ours be disinterested: his was costly—ours must be self-denying. There was unheard-of compassion in his love—ours ought to be pitiful and tender. We should manifest our love by acts of liberality and kindness—for he was most bountiful and beneficent. Our love must be diffusive and wide—for his was universal. We may have particular friendships and attachments; if we have warm hearts, we shall have them; but they must leave us at liberty to care and feel for our poor brethren in Christ, and that for the sake of *Him* who said: "If any one shall give a cup of cold water only unto one of the least of these my brethren, in the name of a disciple, and because he believes in me, verily he shall not lose his reward."

3. The importance of brotherly love in a church appears strikingly from this—that, without it, there can be no permanent union among the members. It is love that unites to its object, and hence the apostle terms it the "bond of perfectness." It is always preferred in scripture to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.—"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." It is even preferred to faith and hope, both on account of the excellency of its nature—as being more like unto the blessed God himself, "for God is love;"—and also for its permanent duration—for, when faith and hope, which respect unseen things, shall have given place to sight, and be lost in enjoyment, then shall love be perfected, and continue for ever, in the heavenly state, so that "Charity never faileth."

To conclude: Seeing, then, brethren, that the exercise

of brotherly love is of such vital importance in the Christian profession, I beseech you to suffer the word of exhortation: "Let brotherly love continue." Beware of whatever would obstruct the free circulation of charity; and beware also that it wax not cold. "Provoke one another"—not to envy, strife, and discord—but "to love and to good works." There will always be room enough for the pressing of this duty in the most perfect church on earth. The Thessalonians were taught of God to love one another; they even extended their regards to all the brethren which were in all Macedonia; yet the apostle beseeches them to abound in the duty yet more and more. His exhortation to the Corinthians was, to "follow after charity,"—to pursue it with ardour and perseverance, like hunters in the chase, as the original term imports. Meditate constantly and intensely on the love which Christ hath manifested towards his disciples,—by dying in their stead, that he might redeem them from death, and procure for them crowns of life. Let us strive to fill our minds with realizing perceptions of this wonderful love to us, and study to imitate it in our love one towards another:—

" Thus will the church below  
Resemble that above;  
Where streams of endless pleasure flow,  
And every heart is love."

## SERMON XIX.

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### THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE LORD'S REFLECTED GLORY.

*But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Cor. iii. 18.

IN the foregoing part of this chapter, the apostle has been instituting a comparison between the Law and the Gospel—the dispensations of Moses, and of Christ—the old and the new Covenants. And while he admits that the former was by no means destitute of glory, nevertheless when brought into comparison with the latter, all its glory seemed to sink into obscurity, so surpassingly excellent was the Gospel above the legal dispensation. The law was the ministration of condemnation and of death—the Gospel, on the other hand, is the ministration of righteousness and life. The law was holy, just, and good—a transcript of the divine perfections, pointing out to men their duty, but cursing every transgressor, and affording no assistance towards fulfilling its righteous requirements; whereas, the Gospel not only supplies a righteousness adequate to its demands, but it is also the ministration of the Spirit, and so gives strength for duty; not only does it justify the ungodly, but it is the principle of sanctification also. In the passage from which the text is taken, the apostle is explaining this mystery; in other words, he is shewing how it is that the

Gospel is the principle of sanctification, and produces its transforming efficacy on the hearts of those who really understand, believe, and love it. The subject is most important, and demands our serious consideration. In attempting to illustrate it, we shall consider I.—What we are to understand by “the glory of the Lord,”—and where that glory is displayed. II.—How a discovery of it communicates its sanctifying influence to the hearts of believers, or the children of God. We shall then III.—Deduce some inferences by way of improvement.

I.—By the glory of THE LORD, in this place, I apprehend that the apostle has in view the glory of Jehovah—the one living and true God—the great first Cause of all things—the Creator of the heavens and the earth—the Sustainer and Preserver of universal nature—the King eternal, immortal, and invisible—*by* whom are all things, and *for* whom are all things, and *to* whom belongs glory for ever. Dwelling in light, which is inaccessible and full of glory, no mortal can approach unto Him—no eye hath seen him at any time; and in this world, he is only known by those manifestations which he hath made of himself, in his works, and in his word. He is, in himself, infinitely glorious, independent of all his works; and whatever is seen or known in this world that is glorious, is but a ray or emanation from himself, who is the Father or fountain of glory.

Again: when we speak of *the Glory* of this sublime Being, we mean the effulgent display, or shining forth, of some of the perfections of his nature in some of his works, or in his word, and by means of which he has condescended to make himself known. He has given us a magnificent display of his glory in the creation of the heavens and the earth, with the countless tribes of living creatures with which he has peopled them. The sun, the moon, the stars—those worlds of light, floating in ether—the innumerable company of angelic

beings which surround his throne, and wait obsequious to his will—the animals which people this earth: “sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea;” and especially man, created in his own image and after his likeness—in all these, he has displayed his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, which are glorious perfections of his nature, and justly entitle him to the admiration, gratitude, love, and praise, of his intelligent creatures,—Psalm xix. 1. Rom. i. 23.

His providential care of his creatures, in providing food for all living, granting rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, causing the earth to yield supplies for man and beast, and preserving them in life during his pleasure;—all this furnishes an additional manifestation of his wisdom and goodness, which carries our views of his character still higher.

These things give a just and true revelation of the invisible God, so far as they go; and it is sufficient to leave inexcusable, all who refuse to acknowledge Him as their author, and render him the tribute of praise and gratitude, for his daily benefits bestowed on them.

But it is in his holy word that he has been pleased to present us with the fullest disclosure of his character and perfections, with additional manifestations of his glory. Here, indeed, his name shines most excellent in all the earth. By means of his word, we are made acquainted with his exuberant goodness to man in his primitive state, both in his formation—being created in the image of his Maker, endowed with powers and faculties of mind far surpassing all the other animals; and also in the dominion which was conferred upon him—for he was made lord of this lower world; and, finally, in the happy circumstances in which he was placed—for “the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, and there he placed the man whom he had formed,” surrounded with every thing that heart could

wish to make him happy,—Gen. ii. But man, being in honour, abode not. Seduced by the tempter, he transgressed the command of his Maker—lost his innocence—and then sin entered into the world, and death by sin, with all the long train of attendant evils that his posterity are heirs to. In this there was a further discovery made of the character of God; for the penalty inflicted upon Adam's disobedience showed that he was just and holy, as well as powerful, wise, and good—that sin is the object of his abhorrence—and that he could not allow it to go unpunished. Adam was now become a transgressor, and he felt the consequence in various ways. He lost the favour of his Maker—was deprived of all comfortable intercourse with him—driven out from Paradise—and sent to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, with an assurance that, after a life of sorrow, and toil, and trouble, he should return again to the dust of the earth.

But even this deplorable event gave occasion to a still further discovery and development of the character of God, with an additional manifestation of his glory; for in the midst of deserved judgment, *mercy* interposed, and this glorious attribute of Deity, now for the first time dawned upon the world, in the promise of a Seed to the woman, which should counteract the seductions of the tempter, and repair the ruins of the fall,—Gen. iii. 15. This *merciful* promise restored man to his allegiance, but it brought him back as a penitent suing for forgiveness—a weeping suppliant to the throne of grace. Enough, however, appeared to shew, that mercy was one of the attributes of the Deity—that though inflexibly just, he was placable; but it did not shew how justice and mercy were to be exercised in harmony with each other—how sin was to be punished, and yet the sinner saved—the claims of justice satisfied, and yet mercy extended to the guilty. To devise a plan whereby this should be accomplished, was work for Infinite Wisdom, and Almighty Power was neces-

sary to carry it into effect. But for the full development of this wondrous method of salvation, we are indebted to divine revelation. It is made known only in the Gospel, which tells us, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." To this, then, our attention is directed, for the fullest manifestation of the glory of the Lord, which we can possibly have of it in this world. So in 2 Cor. iv. 6, the apostle says, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, appears in the face of Jesus Christ." He is "the image of God;" and that which makes him known to us is, "the glorious Gospel of Christ,"—ver. 4. Here, in this blessed object, the person and work of Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, God has manifested himself most gloriously. Those attributes and perfections of his nature, which were separately displayed in his works of creation and providence, such as his wisdom, power, and goodness, are here to be found blazing forth with superior lustre; and, at the same time, united with other attributes, such as mercy, love, and grace, which could not appear in those first works. Here, in the great work of man's redemption, they are all seen combining their rays, and each adding lustre to the other,—the whole constituting what, in my text, is called, "the Glory of the Lord." It is the glorious manifestation of his character, as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin." This glory is concentrated in the face or person of Jesus Christ. HE, as the apostle tells the Hebrews, is "the brightness of his glory—the express image of the person, or character, of the blessed God." But this glory, he here says, is beheld with *open face*,

and as *in a glass*:—what are we to understand by this? I shall endeavour to explain.

There is a difference of opinion among commentators and expositors, as to the personal application of the expression, “with open face.” Some apply it to the apostles in their ministry—others to believers in general—while a third class apply it to Christ; and with these last I agree, because I think that application comports best with the scope of the whole chapter. You must observe that the apostle has been drawing a comparison between the two dispensations, the Law and the Gospel, and also the glory appertaining to each. These are the two covenants, each of which had its mediator. The mediator of the old, or Sinai covenant, was Moses—that of the new covenant, is Christ. We are informed, in Exod. xxxiv. 29, that when Moses came down from the mount, where he had been conversing with God forty days, “the skin of his face shone so bright, that the Israelites could not look upon him.” He therefore put a veil upon his face, until he had done speaking with the people,—ver. 33. The veil, no doubt, was a type or emblem of the darkness of that dispensation, in which the divine glory, now manifested in the Gospel, was veiled under types, and shadows, and ritual observances. It also indicated that, owing to the carnality of their hearts, they were unable to look through these legal types and shadows, so as to contemplate, by faith, the substance or end of them. Now, it is in contrast to this the apostle informs the Corinthians, that the glory of the divine character and perfections appears and shines in the open, or *unveiled*, face of Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, in whom the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines most resplendently; for there believers behold it without a veil, and in doing so, they are changed into the same image or likeness.

But then the apostle informs us further, that though the glory of the Lord now shines most effulgently



in the face of Jesus Christ, yet that believers, while in this mortal state, do not *actually* behold the face of Christ—who is now in heaven, enthroned in glory, and to us invisible. How then do we see him? Why, it is by means of his word—the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles; all of whom testify of him. This is the *glass*, or mirror, in which alone we can behold him in this present world—it is in heaven only, that his disciples shall behold him “face to face.” This word testifies of his person, character, grace, and salvation—his original dignity, as the eternal word—his amazing condescension in assuming human nature into union with the divine—his deep humiliation and abasement, in submitting to be crucified for the salvation of guilty rebels; it tells us of the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth—of the miracles which he wrought in confirmation of his mission and doctrine—of his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. All these things are made known to us by means of his word, and his disciples love him as thus revealed; but they do not actually see him as he is: it is only like looking at an object in a glass, which furnishes but a dark or obscure representation of the real person or thing contemplated. No mirror can reflect an object to such advantage as the object itself may be seen without it. It is true that the veil of types and shadows being removed or taken off, believers under the Gospel have a much more clear and distinct view of Christ, than the Old Testament saints had, and consequently behold more of the divine glory shining in him; they have abundantly more evidences of the presence of God in him, and with him, in his work of obedience and suffering, and in his purity and holiness; yet still, while on earth, they want the sight of their Redeemer’s face, which they behold only through the medium of his word. But this brings me to the next point which I proposed to consider, and that is,—

II. To enquire how a discovery of the divine glory, shining in the person and work of Christ, operates in changing believers into the same image, or transforming them into the similitude of their Lord; in other words, makes them holy as he is holy.

Now this is a part of the subject which, in general, is but imperfectly understood among Christians; but it is of high importance, for it enters deeply into the Christian life and experience, on which account, I feel anxious to gain your attention to it. We have seen that the brightest manifestation of the divine glory, to which we can have access in this life, is made in the face of Christ, who is the very image of the invisible God—the *brightness* of his essential glory. In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—all the perfections, and every attribute of Deity centre in Christ, and are reflected to us in the Gospel of his grace. But the question before us is,—how, or by what means, is the likeness of Jesus Christ impressed upon the minds of his disciples? Whence does the glorious Gospel of the blessed God derive its transforming power and efficacy? Through what mighty influence does it change men into the image it reflects, so as to cause them to advance from one degree of glory to another? My text, indeed, says, that this is effected by *beholding* the glory of God, shining in the face of Christ, through the medium of his word. But as the Gospel has not a transforming efficacy upon all who may be led to hear or read it, the question still recurs, how is it that it becomes the principle of sanctification, and the power of God to salvation, in the cases of some and not of others?

In answering this question, I observe that the first thing necessary, to give the Gospel its transforming efficacy on the human mind, is *Faith* in what the Gospel reveals concerning Christ and his salvation; but it is faith working by *Love*; and both of these, through the instrumentality or agency of the Holy Spirit,

who in my text is termed, the "Spirit of the Lord." This, then, is the subject which I could wish to illustrate a little on the present occasion.

Naturally the mind of a sinner is like ancient chaos—a rude and indigested mass, without form or order; and darkness, in respect to God and himself, pervades the whole. But, as in the first creation, God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and thus produced order, so it is in the new creation; the same Almighty Being shines into the sinner's mind, giving him to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it appears in the face of Christ,—2 Cor. iv. 6. And here commences the *new creature*, of which the apostle so often speaks. The first saving effect of the Gospel upon the heart of any sinner is *faith*, which comes by hearing the word of God read, or preached, or spoken,—Rom. x. 17. Christ Jesus is revealed in the Gospel, in all his grace and salvation; his person, character, offices, and work, are therein made known. It is the office of the HOLY SPIRIT to reveal these things to men, which he does by enlightening their minds into the knowledge of the Scriptures of truth; and, in this way, he produces faith unfeigned. When any are made, through his teaching, to understand and believe the Gospel, they are said to be "begotten by the word of truth"—"born again by the incorruptible seed of the word"—and have "Christ formed in them, the hope of glory." The doctrine of the Gospel is a mould into which the heart of a believer is said to be cast,—Rom. vi. 17; so, by the Spirit's operation, he receives its impress, and it gradually produces its own image upon him, as he grows in the knowledge of it. But then faith, unaccompanied by love, will not produce this. Accordingly we are told, that true *faith* always *works* by *love*. Faith will cast the soul into the form or mould of the thing believed; but it is love that assimilates, or produces a conformity to that which is believed; and

this may serve to explain to us the difference between true faith, and orthodox notions, or merely speculating upon the doctrines of the everlasting Gospel, a point of practical theology which many do not seem to understand. Now in order to place the subject immediately before us, namely, the *transforming* power of the Gospel, in as luminous a point of view as I am able, I submit the following considerations.

1. The clearest and brightest manifestation that we can have of the glory of the Lord, while in the body, is to be seen in the work of redemption finished upon the cross, and made known to us by means of the Gospel of our salvation. Here, indeed, it is that Jesus Christ eminently appears to our view as the brightness of the Father's glory—as the perfect representative of his character. On him, therefore, we are called to fix our attention for a discovery of the glory of the blessed God. The apostles, who beheld him in the days of his flesh, tell us, that they “saw his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,”—John i. 14. But what was this glory of Christ which they saw? It was not the glory of his outward condition, as we behold the glory and grandeur of the kings and potentates of this world, for he made himself of no reputation; the station in which he appeared, was that of a servant—he walked in the condition of a man of low degree—his was a character in humble life, in which godliness and humanity shone to perfection. He kept no court, he had no house of entertainment, and though he made all things, and called the universe into existence by the word of his power—yet he had not of his own where to lay his head. It was the glory of his character, as “*full of grace and truth*,” that they beheld. Believing on him as “God manifest in the flesh,” they saw him at the same time “meek and lowly of heart,” and were struck with his benignity and condescension to men of low estate. And the same may be said of all his other

gracious qualifications—his zeal for the glory of God, and the best interests of mankind—his patience, self-denial, and readiness for the cross—his faith and fervency in prayer—his love to God, and compassion towards the souls of men—his unweariedness in doing good—his purity and universal holiness: these were the amiable excellencies of his character which struck the minds of his apostles, and in which they discerned “his glory;” and as these things form a part of the glorious Gospel of Christ, the believer contemplates them with adoring wonder: they excite his love and delight, and become the objects of his imitation. It is in this way that, through divine influence, they produce a transforming effect upon him. But, further,—

2. The glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, presents us with the highest proof of the love of God to our guilty race; it sets before us his glorious perfections, counsels, will, and grace, in reference to the way of salvation, and shews us how they are manifestly displayed, and that with the brightest and most engaging lustre in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It fixes our attention on the love of God, as the origin and spring of all saving grace, of all spiritual blessings; and thus shews us his whole character summed up in LOVE. It was this wonderful love to our guilty race which prompted him to send his Son into the world, that we might live through him,—John iii. 16. Here the love of the divine Father shines with peculiar lustre. His Son was inexpressibly dear to him, yet he freely resigned him up for the salvation of a lost world; he “spared him not,” but when the claims of justice required it, and could no otherwise be satisfied, consistently with mercy, he gave him up to a life of sorrow and suffering, and, above all, to a death the most shameful, painful, and ignominious—the accursed death of the cross. Believing the love which God hath to our guilty and perishing race, and which is so strikingly manifested in thus yielding up

his beloved Son to die for them, believers are sweetly constrained to love Him who first loved them,—1 John iv, 19. The nearer they contemplate his character, as thus manifested, in the great and stupendous plan of redemption—a plan which originated in his own purpose and grace, and was the result of his own wisdom—an emanation of his unbounded goodness, and executed by his Almighty power; the more they realize his glory, the more they are filled with love and gratitude to Him; and this, in the nature of things, must have a transforming effect upon their souls—“they are changed into the same image from glory to glory;” and this is what I understand by progressive sanctification.

And now this subject being directly before us, I avail myself of the opportunity of offering a few remarks upon it. I scarcely know a doctrine that is more vehemently impugned in the present day than that of progressive sanctification. Its loudest opposers are those of the Hyper-Calvinistic school; and so inveterate is their dislike of it, that they abominate both the name and the thing. But let us examine the matter a little closely, and bring it to “the Law and the Testimony,” and in so doing, we shall soon see, how futile is all the clamour that is raised against it.

The scripture teaches us that, naturally, the heart of man is corrupt, deceitful, and desperately wicked—the sink of iniquity; and that such it remains, even under the best culture, until the finger of God be put forth anew in the work of regeneration: “Ye must be born again,” to see, or enter into, the kingdom of God. And if it be asked, by what means this important change is wrought, the Scriptures tell us, that it is effected by the word of the truth of the Gospel gaining access into the heart, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and so producing faith and love, and every other principle of the divine or spiritual life. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, giving the light of the knowledge of his glory

in the face of Jesus Christ,"—2 Cor. iv. 6. So the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the doctrine which Paul preached concerning Jesus Christ and him crucified,—Acts xvi. The Gospel understood, through divine teaching, and believed, and loved, becomes the principle of sanctification, or holiness of heart and life, and there is nothing that deserves the character of holiness in the world, which is not thus produced. But, then, the divine life bears an analogy to our natural lives, in various respects, as the Scriptures plainly teach, and especially in this respect, that it is a progressive thing—a growth from the state of babes to that of young men; and from that of young men to that of fathers in Christ. Or to refer to our Lord's beautiful similitude, when illustrating the doctrine of his kingdom,—Mark iv. 26, the seed is sown, and in due time it produces, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.

But it may be asked—how does all this prove, that sanctification is a progressive thing?—may it not be communicated at once to the believer, and in so perfect a state as to admit of no increase? To this I answer, unhesitatingly, that the Scriptures pointedly teach the contrary, as may be easily shewn. For instance, love is an essential ingredient in sanctification, or true holiness—love to God—to the Saviour—and to the brethren. Is this found in perfection in any of the saints in this world? Do we not acknowledge in our songs of praise, that—

“ Our faith, and love, and every grace,  
Fall far beneath thy word;  
For perfect truth and holiness  
Dwell only with the Lord.”

Were the case such as the persons referred to contend, how could we account for the exhortation of the apostle Peter, to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?”—2 Peter iii. 18.

For what is it, let me ask, to "grow in grace," but to make progress in all the fruits of the spirit of grace—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance,"—Gal. v. 22, 23. Now all these are ingredients in true holiness, or the sanctification of our corrupted nature; and they are found to exist in an infinite variety of degrees among the children of God in this world, but to be perfect in none; no, not even in the holy apostles themselves, though they were earnestly pressing after that most desirable attainment,—Phil. iii. 12; 1 John i. 8—10, and rejoicing in the prospect that, "when that which is perfect should be come, then that which was in part should be done away,"—1 Cor. xiii. 10. But, not longer to defer the next consideration, I proceed to notice—

3. The discoveries which are made to the believer in the glorious Gospel of Christ, and which are infinitely more excellent, more replete with glory, and more filled with rays of divine wisdom and goodness, than the whole creation can exhibit, independently of them. Without the knowledge which is derived from this source, the mind of man, however much priding itself in other inventions and discoveries, is enveloped in darkness and confusion, and without the light of life. It was this that led an apostle to say: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the EXCELLENCY of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He had studied theology, as a science, under that eminent doctor—Gamaliel; but it was aside from the doctrine of Christ crucified; and while that was the case, he saw neither form nor comeliness in "the image of the invisible God." Nay, he verily thought it his duty to persecute and punish his disciples to the utmost of his power. But when it pleased God to open the eyes of his mind, and communicate to him the knowledge of Christ, O what wonders burst upon his view! Here he beheld spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, shining all at once—none of them darkening or



eclipsing the other, but each adding a lustre to the rest—mingling their beams, and glowing with united eternal splendour. He now saw the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor, combined in one: they all appeared at once to his astonished view. No other object affords such a display of every glorious perfection. No where does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound, as in the work of our redemption. On this part of the subject it were easy to amplify and enlarge; but what I have more particularly in view, is to direct your minds to the powerful *effects* produced by the doctrine of the cross, wherever its glory is perceived by the eye of faith. The light which it diffuses is justly termed marvellous!—the apostle found it so in his own experience. It revolutionized all his sentiments—it changed him from a mad persecutor into a zealous apostle—it transformed him into the image of Christ—and this is what he is speaking of in my text; and it possesses the same sovereign power to produce similar effects upon others. “An Ethiopian,” as one well observes, “may look long enough at the visible sun before it changes his black colour; but this object does it effectually. It melts cold and frozen hearts—it breaks the heart of stone—it pierces adamant—and penetrates through thick darkness. It gives eyes to the blind to look at itself; and not to the blind only, but to the dead. It is the light of life—a most powerful light! its energy is beyond the voice of thunder, and yet more mild than the dew upon the tender grass.” But,—

4. Love to Christ always operates in the heart of a believer, in leading him to *imitate his Lord's example*. “He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” But believers are “predestinated to be conformed to his image,” or likeness, for he is the first-born among many brethren. The Gospel of Christ abounds with the strongest motives to hate sin, and to cultivate

universal holiness of heart and life. Not only does it enjoin and *command* us to be “holy as God is holy”—to “let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus”—“to walk in love as he hath loved us”—to “abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good;”—but it also furnishes *motives* to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. The Gospel contains “exceeding great and precious promises, whereby the believer is made a partaker of the divine nature.” Among these is the promise of the Holy Spirit, as the Comforter, and Sanctifier, of the children of God, sealing them to the day of redemption. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to men—reveals the Saviour’s love and grace—and sweetly constrains them to imitate his example, imbibe his Spirit, and walk in his steps.

On this subject it has been well observed by Dr. Owen, that “a Christian who is meek, humble, kind, patient, and lays himself out to be useful to others; who condescends to their ignorance, weaknesses, and infirmities; one that passes by provocations, injuries, and contempt, with patience and in silence, except where the glory of God and the honour of truth call for a just vindication;—that pities all sorts of men in their failings and miscarriages—who is free from jealousies and evil surmisings—loves what is good in all—and even his enemies who mal-treat him—such an one gives a fairer exhibition of true and genuine Christianity, the virtues and excellencies of Christ, than thousands can do by means of the most splendid works of piety and charity, where this frame of mind is wanting in them. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, while they are proud, wrathful, envious, bitterly zealous, calling for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry to the Saviour, ‘Hail, Master,’ and crucify him afresh to their own power.” Let us, my brethren, beware of the influence of such examples. Rather let us have continually before our eyes, the “meekness and gentleness

of Christ," and strive and pray that we may be changed into his image and likeness.

The subject which we have now had under consideration admits of a most important practical improvement. For instance, it shows us, very clearly, in what the Christian life consists—namely, in the exercise of faith on the Son of God—in realizing views of the glory of his character, and of the lustre of the divine perfections as displayed in him. It is from this that love to God and to the Saviour also takes its rise; and of how much importance the principle of love is in true religion, we need no stronger testimony than this:—"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha"—accursed when the Lord cometh. Such was *his* love to our guilty race—so fervent, so pure, so disinterested and generous—that, to requite it with cold indifference and contempt must entail, on the unhappy subject, irretrievable ruin. It was a perception of Christ's love to us that led the apostle to say: "We thus judge, that if one died for all; then they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them."

Every Christian must have some perception of the glory of Christ, in his person, offices, and grace, so as to excite his love and draw forth his affections. Without this, he is no Christian, though he may have a name and place in the purest church on earth. Let us look well, then, to the state of our hearts and affections, as respects Christ and his Gospel. But,—

Further, no man has any warrant to expect, that he shall ever behold the glory of Christ by *sight* in heaven, who does not, in some measure, behold it by *faith* on earth. Grace is a preparation for glory; and faith for sight. The soul that is not previously endowed with spiritual illumination, and faith in the Son of God, is not capable of glory, or seeing Christ as he is. All men, indeed, think themselves fit enough for heaven—what should hinder? Men in general will say,

and that confidently, living and dying, that they desire to be with Christ, and behold his glory; but the truth is, they know not what they say, for they can give no reason why they should desire any such thing. Men will not be clothed with glory, whether they will or not. Heaven would be no place of happiness to men that died in their sins, were it possible for them to be admitted there. Music hath no charms to those that cannot hear; nor the most beautiful colours to those that cannot see. Take a fish from the bottom of the ocean, where all is cold and dark, and place it under the cheering beams of the sun—it will derive no benefit from them; and that for a good reason—it is not its element. Heaven itself would not be more advantageous to persons who, on quitting this world, were unrenewed in the spirit of their minds. Hence we find the apostle giving thanks unto the Father “who had made believers on earth *meet to be partakers* of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Again, we may learn, from what has been said, how much our present edification is concerned in having faith and love in lively exercise. In the contemplation of the glory of Christ, the life and power of faith are called into exercise; and if we would have faith in its vigour, or love in its power, giving rest, complacency, and satisfaction, to our souls, we must seek for them in the diligent discharge of that delightful duty—meditation on the glory of Christ. This will deaden our affections to the world, and make us spiritually minded. No one can, by a true and living faith, take frequent views of the glory of God, shining in the face of Christ, without experiencing, in some degree, its transforming power, changing him into the same image; and the way to be truly happy in our Christian profession, is to be in the constant contemplation of the glory of Christ, as he appears to us in the Gospel of his grace. Our minds are apt to be filled with a multiplicity of perplexing thoughts, fears, cares, dangers, distresses; yea, lusts and

passions make impressions on the mind, filling it with disorder, darkness, and confusion. The grand remedy for this is, to have the soul fixed in its thoughts and contemplations on this glorious object—that alone will bring it into, and keep it in, a holy, serene, and spiritual frame; the want of which makes us strangers to a heavenly life, and causes us to live beneath the spiritual refreshments and satisfactions, which the Gospel is designed and calculated to administer.

Finally, the sight of the glory of Christ, *by faith*, is the spring and foretaste of everlasting blessedness. "This is life eternal—to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent."

Let us never lose sight of this, that grace is a preparation for glory; and let it be our continual and fervent prayer to the Father of lights, that we may be growing in grace—that is, in all the fruits of the Spirit—faith, hope, and love—humility and meekness—gentleness and goodness—till, by being transformed into the image of Christ, we are made meet to dwell with him for ever in his eternal kingdom. AMEN.

Hail, thou Eternal FULNESS, hail!  
Great Source of bliss divine;  
In whom adoring angels see,  
All thy Great Father shine.

JESUS,—O may that best of names,  
Dwell ever on my tongue;  
On earth my solace, hope, and joy;  
In heaven my rapturous song.

## SERMON XX.

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### ON SELF-DENIAL, AND TAKING UP THE CROSS.

*And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

Mark viii. 34.

IF we attend to the context, and observe the connexion in which these words stand, whether in the chapter before us, or in the other evangelists,—Matt. xvi., and Luke ix., we shall find, that the Lord Jesus Christ had been drawing the attention of his disciples to the principal end and design of his mission into our world, which was to close his ministry, by an act of obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, in laying down his life for those whom the Father had given him to redeem from the curse and condemnation of the divine law; thus suffering the punishment which was due unto their iniquities, and giving himself a ransom for them. Let us read the words, from ver. 31,—

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly: and Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get thee

behind me, Satan ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”

The zeal of Peter, in this instance, however well meant, was highly indiscreet. He did not perceive, that while he was expressing a wish to prevent the death of his Lord, that he was desiring to counteract the counsels of heaven, and to hinder an event, by which the glory of God is more highly exalted, than by any other in the whole administration of Providence. But this is one instance among many, which serve to teach us, that the ways and thoughts of God are as high above those of men, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Not, however, to dwell on this, I proceed to notice, that our Lord addressed his discourse to the people at large, and not merely to his own disciples ; whence we may learn, that we have all of us a deep interest in the doctrine contained in the words of my text.

With a view to illustrate them, we shall consider what is implied in following Christ ;—then advert to some things which are necessary in order to this ;—and, afterwards, specify some of the motives which should induce us to fulfil the duty. It is needless to take up your time in evincing, that to “come after Christ”—to “follow him”—and to “be his disciples,” are all expressions of similar import, and are used as synonymous in the New Testament. Presuming we are all aware of this, I shall not dwell upon it, but shall proceed with the nature of the duty in question.

I. In entering on my subject, I remark that there are two leading particulars in which the disciples of Christ are called to follow their divine Master ;—the first respects his teaching or *doctrine* ;—and the other, his *example* : and they are both essential to the formation of the Christian character. I shall briefly touch upon each.

Moses, the Jewish Lawgiver, foretold that God would raise up unto his people Israel a prophet like

unto himself, whom they should hear in all things ; and we find the apostle Peter expressly applying that prediction to Christ. Compare—Deut. xviii. 18 ; with Acts iii. 22. Accordingly when our Lord commenced his public ministry, he thus announced his official character, as the great Teacher sent from God. “ I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,”—John viii. 12. And in the synagogue of Nazareth, we find him applying to himself, a remarkable passage in the writings of Isaiah : “ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted ; to preach deliverance to the captives ; the recovery of sight to the blind ; to set at liberty them that are bruised ; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord,”—Luke iv. 18. The subject of his ministry was “ the great salvation,”—Heb. ii. 3., a theme of vast extent, and of transcendent importance to all the children of men. Let us glance at a few things contained in it. And, first, with regard to *the world at large*, the Lord Jesus uniformly testified, that the works thereof are evil,—John vii. 7. ; in other words, that all men are naturally in a lost, fallen, and guilty state—a doctrine which lies at the foundation of all his teaching. And this he has illustrated by some of the most beautiful and touching parables that ever were delivered : such as that of the lost sheep—the prodigal son—and the lost piece of silver : all of them recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. Now it is upon this view of our fallen and guilty state, that what he said to Nicodemus is founded : “ Ye must be born again, or ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” In fact, it is only when considered in reference to this awful state of things, that we can enter into the full import of such sayings as these : “ The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost.” And, again, “ Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered



unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "I am the good Shepherd, and lay down my life for the sheep."

But I remark, further, that the doctrine which our Lord taught, during his public ministry, had a special reference to *the character of God*. The world by all its wisdom knew him not; and it was reserved for the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom, or secret counsels, of the Father, fully to declare him. In his doctrine he unfolded these counsels, opening up to our view his real character, as summed up in "love." He declared the love which God hath towards our fallen race; and exhibited this as the source, the origin, the spring and design, of his own mission into our guilty world,—John iii. 16—18. And so when about to leave the world, we find him thus addressing his heavenly Father: "I have manifested thy name, or character, unto the men which thou hast given me out of the world;" for, as he had said just before, "this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,"—John xvii. 4, 6.

Once more: the doctrine which Christ taught while on earth included, also, the truth concerning his own character, as a divine person, the Son of the Highest—the object, end, and design, of his coming into our world, together with his sufferings, death, resurrection, exaltation to the Father's right hand, and the nature of the kingdom which he came to set up and establish among men—a kingdom not of this world, but altogether spiritual and heavenly. This is a brief summary of the doctrine which, during the personal ministry of the Saviour, he was engaged in stating and maintaining; and the cordial reception of this doctrine is necessary to enable any sinner to follow Christ. Believing these grand and fundamental truths, we are led to receive Christ in the various offices which he sustains in the economy of our redemption, as the anointed Prophet,

Priest, and King of his church; and it is thus that we are led, like Mary of old, to sit daily at our divine Master's feet, and listen to his heavenly words. And, indeed, without this we cannot be duly furnished for the Christian warfare; nor can we stir a single step in the race of faith and patience, to which the Gospel calls all who would inherit eternal life. Hence we find our blessed Lord thus describing his real disciples: "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me,"—John x. 27. They hear him speaking to them in his holy word, which is the voice of mercy, making known the Gospel of salvation: they hear him also in his promises, and in his threatenings too—in a word, they receive his doctrine, and obey his precepts, which leads me to notice the other branch of this division of my subject; namely, that—

To follow Christ is to be submissive to his authority—to obey his laws,—and to imitate his example.

It is no doubt true, that in accomplishing our redemption, the Son of God sustained a peculiar character, acted in a capacity, and performed works, which we cannot presume to imitate. He acted as God's righteous servant, whose ear was opened to all his Father's commands—whose meat and drink it was to do his will, and to finish the work which was assigned to him; and especially was he obedient to his command, in laying down his life for the sheep. Though Lord of all, he was made, for a little while, lower than the angels, in order that he might suffer death, for the redemption of transgressors: but as the reward of his sufferings, he is now crowned with glory and honour at the Father's right hand in heaven. All authority and power are committed unto him, both in heaven and on earth; even angels, the highest order of created beings, are put in subjection unto him, and are commanded to worship him,—Heb. i. 6. The Church is his purchased possession: He is its head, as respects dominion and rule, as well as vital influ-

ence; and He alone is Lord, Lawgiver, and King; for to Him, "every knee must bow, and every tongue confess." "Behold," saith Jehovah, "I have given him for a witness," that is, a prophet, or teacher, to testify of me "to the people:" and not only so—"I have given him as a leader and commander to the people,"—Isaiah lv. 4. He is the Captain of salvation, made perfect through suffering; and to follow him is to own allegiance to him as our rightful sovereign—to receive his word as law—to acknowledge him as King set on God's holy hill of Zion—to fight under his banners,—and to own no rival authority in his kingdom. But, then,—

To follow Christ, or to come after him, implies our taking him for our pattern or example, and so walking as he walked, while he tabernacled among us.

Need I tell you, brethren, that the character of Christ is the prime pattern of all true godliness? On this account it is the apostle John tells us: "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar; and the truth is not in him."—"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he," that is, Christ, "walked",—1 John ii. 4—6. His holiness, in general, is set forth as the object of our imitation. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Hence the exhortation: "As he who hath called us is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation," or conduct. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his,'—and, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" Such is the declared end of his death, for, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,"—Titus ii. 14.

Further: the disciples of Christ are called to imitate

him, in his devotedness to the will of his heavenly Father. As he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him; so it was his meat and his drink to be employed about it. In the most painful and trying situations in which he could be placed, we find him saying: "Father, not my will, but thine be done."—"Father, I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And this obedience of his, met with the highest acceptance at the hands of his heavenly Father, who not only loved him for it, but also conferred on him the highest reward, by raising him from the dead, and exalting him to the highest state of honour and glory in the heavens,—Phil. ii. 9—11.

In connexion with this obedience, the apostle Paul sets before us the Saviour's *humility* and amazing *condescension* as a pattern for the imitation of all his disciples. "Let that mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to claim equality with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"—ver. 6—8. Our Lord was rich in immortal glory; but for the sake of his guilty people, he became poor—"a worm and no man,"—as expressed in prophecy, that his poverty might enrich his people. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and so he tells his disciples: "I am among you as one that serveth."—"Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am; imitate, then, my grace and condescension, for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you: surely the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent, greater than he which sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

In concluding the present head of discourse, let me call your attention to the example of our Saviour, as a pattern of submission to the will of God in suffering affliction, and of patience under it. No language of mine can set this part of the subject in so forcible a point of view, as the words of the apostle Peter: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."—"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,"—1 Peter ii. 19—23; and chap. iv. 1. And I content myself with reading these passages, and leaving them to your own meditations.

We come next to consider, as proposed,—

II. Some things which are absolutely necessary, in order to our following Christ, as the subject has been now explained. And that which first presents itself from our Lord's words, is the duty of *self-denial*. "If any man will come after me—*let him deny himself*," &c. But it is possible that, to some who now hear me, this may need a little explanation.

To *deny ourselves* is, surely, a very remarkable command; and seems to imply that there must be something amiss—something wrong in ourselves—something which requires to be remedied; why else are we called to put a constraint upon nature, or offer a kind of violence to our inclinations and passions? It is mani-

fest that nature must crave something improper, or why should it be denied? Our blessed Lord had nothing in him that called for self-denial; for "in him was no sin, neither was guile found in his [mouth]." With us, however, the case is widely different<sup>d</sup>; for we are all the subjects of a corrupted nature, and are naturally estranged from the life of God, shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; we are transgressors from the womb; and as we grow up, we find that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that our carnal mind is enmity against God—and so we pursue the bent of our inclinations, wandering afar off from God, and from that happiness which lies in his favour. Such, according to the Scriptures, is the case universally with our fallen race; such the course of this world, or the men of the world; and hence the necessity of our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, if we would become the real disciples of Christ, and follow him in the path of regeneration. But I shall instance a few leading particulars, in which the Gospel calls upon us to deny ourselves, if indeed we would follow Christ.

1. To be a disciple of Christ, or a follower of Him, who is the Captain of salvation, we must be denied to *our own righteousness*, as the ground of our acceptance with God. For as there are none naturally righteous, no not one—as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God—as the divine law brings us all in guilty before God; so the word of God testifies that "by the deeds of the law," or our obedience to it, "no flesh living shall be justified." And yet, though the holy law of God absolutely refuses to justify a sinner; and though our own consciences, if not seared as with a hot iron, must ever testify against us, that we "have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" nevertheless, we as naturally cling to the law, and seek acceptance by it, as we breathe the vital air. But what says the Gospel to this? Why, it declares, that "by the works of the law shall no

flesh living be justified;" and it declares that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, or justification, to every one that believeth." As the Son of God came down from heaven to work out the justifying righteousness, by means of his own all-perfect conformity to the divine law, and that in the room of his guilty people, so his righteousness is said to be "unto and upon all *that believe*, and that without difference." And hence he is said to be the Lord our righteousness and strength—and to be made of God unto us, "wisdom and righteousness." We cannot, then, be his disciples, unless we absolutely and entirely relinquish working, with the view of appeasing divine justice, or making our peace with God,—and fully credit the Gospel testimony concerning Christ, whose righteousness alone is commensurate to the requirements of the divine law, and in which God hath declared his fullest satisfaction. In his most perfect obedience, there is every thing that law and justice demand from the sinner, already wrought out by a divine substitute, and imputed to the believer as his justifying righteousness,—See Phil. iii.

2. To follow Christ, or become his real disciples, we must be denied to the love of this present evil world, so as not to seek our happiness, or highest enjoyment, in it. Christ calls his disciples out from the world, because he has redeemed them from it, by the price of his own blood,—Gal. i. 4; and he requires them not to be conformed to it, in its lusts, maxims, or pursuits. "Ye are not of the world," said he to his first disciples, "even as I am not of the world,—John xv. 19. Hence the exhortation of the apostle John: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,"—1 John ii. 15. Christ calls his followers to abandon this world as their portion, and not to pursue its pleasures, riches, honours, or distinctions, as the source of their happiness, or chief good, but

to “set their affection on things that are above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God,”—and to follow him in the path of self-denial. To encourage them in this course, he promises them glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, beyond death and the grave; but then he connects this with a patient continuance in well-doing, and also with *taking up the cross*, which is another important duty incumbent on all his disciples.

In this latter particular, there is, doubtless, an allusion to the instrument of our Saviour's own death; and so he will have all his followers, in their measure, to be “conformable to him in his death.” Indeed, there is great force and propriety in terming the path of self-denying obedience a cross; for it manifestly denotes something afflictive—something that crosses the inclination—something that is opposed to the love of ease and pleasure inherent in our nature. It denotes the conflict that must be maintained against our sinful propensities, in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts—mortifying the deeds of the body—putting off the old man, which is corrupt—and warring a good warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The followers of Christ must pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, as strangers and pilgrims, abstaining from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; and in all, thus following Christ, that is, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, and Captain of salvation, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now for ever set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

3. I add, that the exercise of self-denial, and taking up the cross, are necessary to our becoming the subjects of Christ's visible kingdom, and obeying his laws, or observing his institutions. Here let me explain:—

It is the will of Christ, plainly revealed in the New Testament, that all who believe his Gospel should be baptized in his name,—Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16;



Acts viii. 16; xix. 5. Baptism is, therefore, the door of admission into his *visible* kingdom. In this ordinance, the believer confesses Christ's name before men—owns him as his God and Saviour,—and practically declares, that all his dependance for salvation is founded upon his death and resurrection,—Rom. vi. 3—5. In this way he is called to put on Christ, according to Gal. iii. 27; “for as many as have been baptized into Christ have *put on Christ.*” But it has some how come to pass in our day, that even to obey the command, and also follow the example of the Son of God, in *this* ordinance, is to expose one's self to the scorn, the obloquy, and the derision of a world, called Christian; and hence the necessity of self-denial, and taking up the cross, if we would follow Christ. But, further,—

4. It is the revealed will of Christ, that his disciples, who have been baptized in his name, should separate themselves from all *religious* intercourse with unbelievers and mere formal professors—join themselves to the churches of the saints, the dwelling places of Mount Zion,—and observe the ordinances of public worship as the apostles delivered them to the churches,—Acts ii. 41—47. And this is often found one of the greatest trials to which the disciples can be exposed! Here the ties of nature and consanguinity—of esteem, and friendship, and personal attachment,—become formidable obstacles to encounter; and to resist such pleas as are founded on principles aside from the truth, is like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. Hence, again, the necessity of self-denial, and taking up the cross!

And here I should have closed what I have to say on this head, were it not that the spirit of error, now so busily at work among the professed churches of Christ, makes it necessary to take notice of a mischievous innovation which is daily gaining ground, (and with frightful strides, too,) in relation to the terms of communion between professors. To abide strictly by “the Law and the Testimony,”—the precepts of Christ, and

the example of the apostolic churches, in the admission of members to the Lord's table,—is now scouted as the quintessence of bigotry, sectarianism, and party-spirit; and the man who abides firmly by the rule of the word of God, is sure to be stigmatized with opprobrious epithets, and to have his name cast out as evil: this is another occasion of self-denial and taking up the cross. To state this point in a few words, I remark, that the principle which is now allowed to regulate the communion of churches in general is this—that all whom we can charitably hope to be Christians, ought to be received by us into communion, whatever may be their views of the nature and laws of Christ's kingdom, and whether they have obeyed his will, by being baptized on a personal profession of their faith in him, or not.

This, however, is a most *unscriptural* principle upon which to proceed, as it is easy to shew; it is also fraught with consequences most ruinous to the peace, order, and harmony of the churches of Christ; for which reasons, I deem it my duty to warn you against it. *There is no such communion exemplified in the New Testament*, and if we act under the influence of the fear of God, that will be sufficient to deter us from giving it the least sanction. Persons may be received by Christ into communion with himself, in the invisible blessings of his kingdom, whom we could not consistently receive into our communion, for this important reason,—that we have no precedent for it in all the New Testament, which alone, (and not our good opinion of men) is the rule of our church-government. We do not doubt that the Lord has many of his people scattered among various societies around us—not only in dissenting churches, but also in the churches of England and of Scotland—and even in the church of Rome itself, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth; for to such is the call from heaven addressed: “Come out of her, my people, that ye partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues,”—Rev. xvii; but so long as they turn a deaf ear to that call, and continue to

reside in Babylon, we durst not receive them into our fellowship, though it were only to "occasional communion;"—yet to this extent the principle in question, if consistently followed up, certainly leads those who hold it; though I believe that few of its advocates are aware of its ultimate tendency.

III. We come now, in the last place, to notice the *motives* which the Gospel furnishes, in order to influence the disciples of Christ to take up the cross, and follow him. And here our minds are struck, in the first place, with *the character of our Leader*. Who is it that you are called to follow? Why, it is CHRIST! And who is HE? The Lord of glory—the Son of the Highest—the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords—the image of the invisible God—the object of worship both to angels and men. And is there nothing in this consideration to arm you with fortitude in taking up the cross, in ranging yourselves under his banner, and following him in the path of self-denying obedience? There is no duty to which you are called in his kingdom, in the discharge of which he has not gone before you, and set you an example how you ought to demean yourself as his disciple and follower.

In the next place, we should never fail to bear in mind, that an imitation of his character, walking in his ways, and fighting under his banners, is the *road to real honour and true glory*. I do not here advert to that honour and glory which cometh from men, and which the world applauds; but that which cometh from God, whose thoughts are not as the thoughts of his creatures, and whose ways are not as theirs. What was the character of your glorious leader, God's only Son, while he tabernacled on this vile earth? It was a character in low life, destitute of all those shining and attractive qualities which glitter in the eyes of depraved mortals. He was as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, and the creatures whom his hand had made,

hid, as it were, their faces from him. Yet was his character the centre of Jehovah's delight, while that which was highly esteemed among men, was an abomination in the sight of God. Well might he say, as he did in the days of his public ministry: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Finally, let us never forget that this path, the path of self-denying obedience, and taking up the cross, issues in eternal glory in the world to come.

On this subject nothing can be more express and pointed than the Saviour's own words, immediately following my text;—"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it: for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him, also, shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Remember, that, "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him: but if we deny him, he also will deny us. And fix this in your minds as an established truth, that there is no way to the *crown* but by the *cross*. Seeing, then, that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses—prophets, apostles, and martyrs, with the spirits of just men made perfect—all looking down upon us from their blissful abodes—let us lay aside every weight, and every besetting sin, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,"—Heb. xii. 1, 2. Attend to his voice, which now speaks to you from heaven, saying to all his faithful followers: "Him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne,"—Rev. iii. 21.

## SERMON XXI.

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### DIVINE INFLUENCE NECESSARY TO GIVE THE GOSPEL EFFECT.

*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

I Cor. ii. 14.

IT is a very strong expression which the apostle makes use of in this first epistle to the Corinthian church, when he says: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." The city of Corinth, at the time the apostle wrote to the disciples there, was famous for its schools of learning. It abounded with academies which were in the highest repute. In these the study of philosophy and the sciences was cultivated—eloquence and oratory were carried to a high degree of perfection—and to have been educated in that renowned city, was a passport to literary fame. It is manifest, however, from the whole tenor of this epistle, that the advantages which were derived from this source, were all restricted to the present life—to the well being of society; they served to polish the manners and refine the taste, but they contributed nothing towards man's great concern, as a guilty, depraved, and fallen creature; for the apostle testifies that the world, by all its wisdom, knew not

God,—chap. i. 21. When, therefore, he first came among them, to instruct them in the things that concerned their eternal peace, he did not avail himself of the wisdom of the schools—“he came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom,” but simply declared unto them the testimony of God concerning his Son—“he preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”—chap. ii. 1, 2; a doctrine which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness: yet however unpalatable it was to either the one or the other, it was “the wisdom of God, and the power of God, to the salvation of all that received it;” and it was in this way that God made foolish the wisdom of this world.

But then, some may ask, does the apostle mean to teach this humbling doctrine,—that the philosophy of the schools was of *no* avail in enabling men to understand and believe the Gospel truths which the apostles preached among the nations? He answers this question in my text, when he declares, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

This subject I shall now attempt to illustrate by shewing—WHO is meant by the *natural man*—WHAT by the *things of the Spirit of God*—WHY the natural man cannot receive them—and HOW they are received. Having examined these points, I shall shew *the use* we should make of the subject.

I. The first thing that claims our attention here is, the import of the term “*natural*,”—so that we may ascertain who or what the apostle means by “the natural man.” And this is an important inquiry, for the drift of the whole of his remarks throughout the chapter depends upon it. If we consult commentators, we shall find them much divided upon the point. Some tell us that by the *natural* man, in this place, the apostle means a

person devoid of natural judgment, of reason, and of conscience—in which sense the word is frequently used in common speech, or language. And in this sense it is equivalent to a fool or idiot—a man destitute of the exercise of a sound understanding—one that is naturally incapable of judging between right and wrong. But this is not the sense of the expression here, as I shall presently shew.

Others tell us that, by a “natural man,” the apostle intends one who is entirely governed by his fleshly appetites—one who makes the faculties of his animal nature, that is, his senses, or passions, the measure of truth, and the rule of his conduct—in other words, by the animal man they understand, a voluptuary or sensualist; but neither is this the meaning of the phrase in this place.

According to a third class of expositors, the natural man here denotes a person merely in the rude state of nature, whose faculties have not been cultivated by education and study—one who has not had the benefit of learning, and the advantages of polished society—an untutored clown. But this interpretation is also foreign to the apostle’s design, as will presently appear.

I may go one step further, and add, that the expression is not to be understood as pointing out a person that is destitute of all religion; for a proper attention to the scope of the New Testament at large, and of this epistle to the Corinthians in particular, may serve to convince us, that men may have a great zeal for some kind of religion, and yet rank among those of whom the apostle declares in the text, that “they receive not the things of the Spirit of God.”

To come, then, to the subject, be it observed, that the apostle takes his “natural man” from among such as the world at that time held in the highest repute for their natural parts, their learning, and their religion; to wit, the philosophers of Greece, who sought after wisdom; and the Jewish scribes, or teachers, who were

instructed in the revealed law of God; for it is of them that he has been speaking in the preceding chap. ver. 22, 23, and concerning whom he declares, that the doctrine which he preached, namely, Christ crucified, was to the one a stumbling block, and to the other, foolishness. These are the persons whom he terms “the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world,—ver. 20, 23; and from them he takes his “natural man.”

Again: the “natural man” is here evidently opposed to “him that is spiritual,”—ver. 15; even as the natural body, which we derive from our first parent, Adam, is opposed to the spiritual body, which the saints shall receive from Christ, at the resurrection, according to 1 Cor. xv. 44, 45. Now the spiritual man is one who has the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him,—Rom. viii. 9; for all Christ’s people are partakers of his Spirit—not merely in the way of miraculous gifts, as some expositors inform us; for these were peculiar to the first age, and not common to all the saints, nor yet inseparably connected with salvation,—1 Cor. xiii. 1—4; Heb. vi. 4—7; but in his saving influences of light, holiness, and consolation, whereby the happy subject is made to discern the truth and excellency of spiritual things, and consequently to know, love, and delight in them as his true happiness,—1 Cor. ii. 10, 12; Phil. iii. 7—15. This is to be born of the Spirit; to be quickened to a new life, and introduced into a new world, where he finds new objects of hope and fear, of love and aversion, of pursuit and enjoyment. This is to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace,—Rom. viii. 6; and to such, Christ crucified is the wisdom and power of God unto their salvation.

If, therefore, a man is denominated *spiritual*, because the Spirit of Christ dwells in him, communicating to him new views, and dispositions, and enjoyments—then, it seems to follow, by inevitable consequence, that the *natural* man, being opposed to such, must be one who



is destitute of the Spirit, and of all his saving and supernatural effects—a mere child of Adam, without any vital principle of spiritual life communicated from Christ, the quickening Spirit,—and so he must be incapable of discerning, relishing, or enjoying spiritual objects, or whatever is above the sphere of the natural, animal, or earthly life. Accordingly Jude describes those who are *sensual* or animal, (*ψυχικοί*, the word in Greek being the same used by Paul in my text)—“*as having not the Spirit,*”—ver. 19. And this is the actual state of all the *unregenerate* part of mankind, however privileged numbers of them may be by adventitious circumstances—such as birth, education, country, and climate—the attainments of science, philosophy, and the arts—the advantages of knowledge, and the benefits of civilization. They come into the world, the subjects of corrupt nature and depraved inclinations, and as they grow up, they never fail to manifest this, by the darkness of their understandings, and the alienation of their hearts from the love of God, and delight in his ways.

II. Our next object of inquiry is,—“What are *the things of the Spirit of God*, which the natural man cannot receive?” And an answer to this may be easily collected from the context, where they are pointed out by various phrases and expressions, such as, “the testimony of or concerning Christ,”—chap. i. 6; “the testimony of God,”—chap. ii. 1; “the doctrine of Christ crucified,”—chap. i. 23, and chap. ii. 2. A little before the text, the apostle terms it, “the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world began, unto our glory,”—ver. 7—9. It is said to have been hidden, because, under the former dispensation, it was only obscurely intimated in types, but not clearly revealed; for it is written: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But (says

the apostle) "God hath revealed them unto us by the Spirit." They are the things which the apostles spoke, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual,"—ver. 9—14.

From the texts now referred to and quoted, it is manifest that "the things of the Spirit of God," are the things held forth in the Gospel, relating to Christ Jesus the Lord, and the salvation that he hath effected in behalf of his guilty people. And they are termed "the things of the Spirit;" not only because they are spiritual in their nature, but also because they are revealed by the Spirit, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,"—ver. 10. And the Spirit is given for this end, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,"—ver. 12; agreeably to which, our Lord says, "The Spirit of truth shall testify of me: he shall guide you into all the truth: he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you,"—John xv. 26; chap. xvi. 13, 14. Not only did the Holy Spirit at first declare the mind of God in the Scriptures of truth, which were given by his inspiration, and are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus; but he also continues to enlighten the minds of men into the things contained in them, and by that means produces faith, hope, and love—purifies their hearts, and promotes all his sanctifying and saving effects upon them.

Now, to sum up what hath been stated under this head, let it be observed, that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ;" that all we can know of Christ in this world, is through the medium of divine revelation, which is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and reveals Christ's glorious grace to the heirs of salvation; that such is the power of nature's darkness, and the innate depravity of the human

heart, that “the wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts,”—Psalm x. 4; and that the grand things which are made known in the everlasting Gospel, concerning the mission of the Son of God into this world:—his incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection, together with the demonstration of the good pleasure of God in his work, and the promise of salvation to all who credit the record that God hath given of him;—that these are the things of the Spirit of God, and that to his divine agency we are indebted for making them known to us. These are the things of the Spirit, of which the apostle speaks in my text.

III. It is affirmed in the text, that “the natural man *receiveth not*” these things; that is, so long as he continues in his natural state, destitute of the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; he neither perceives their glory and importance, nor does he believe or approve the things that are peculiar to the Gospel revelation. Nay, the apostle goes further than this, by conclusively adding, “neither *can he know* them;” in other words, he can have no true discernment of their nature, excellency, and importance, however great an adept he may be in the wisdom of this world, which cometh to nought,—John iii. 3—5.

The apostle, in the words of my text, is not merely informing us, that a man could never discover the things of the Spirit of God, without the Gospel revelation; for, though this, no doubt, is a truth, it is not the main thing that is taught us in the text. The inspired writer evidently supposes the natural man to be possessed of the outward revelation of the Gospel; for how else could it be “foolishness,” or a “stumbling-block” to him? or how could he be charged with *rejecting*, or not receiving, what he had never heard? But that which he intends to teach us is, that the most wise, and learned, and discerning, of the human

race, can neither receive nor know the Gospel, though it be declared to him in the clearest manner, unless he be inwardly taught by the Spirit of God. This doctrine is very humbling to the proud heart of the unregenerate man; nevertheless, it runs through the whole scripture, which declares the inefficacy of all outward means, without the teaching, or inward energy, of the Holy Spirit. "Under the former dispensation, Israel heard the word of God, by the ministry of the prophets; but the greater part of them persisted in gainsaying and disobedience,"—Rom. x. 18, 21. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it,"—Heb. iv. 2; and "*faith*, be it remembered, *is the gift of God*,"—Eph. ii. 8. The inward energy of the Spirit is clearly distinguished from the outward means, in numerous places of scripture. Thus, for instance, our Lord not only *expounded* the Scriptures to his disciples, but he also *opened* their *understandings*, that they might understand them,—Luke xxiv. 27, 45. The *preaching* of the *apostle* Paul is distinguished from the *power* of the *Lord* in opening the understanding, or heart, as in the case of Lydia,—Acts. xvi. 14. Paul planted the seed at Corinth, and Apollos watered it, but God gave the increase,—1 Cor. iii. 7. God is not only the author of the Gospel, but *all its success*, in the way of enlightening, converting, and sanctifying the souls of men, *depends ENTIRELY upon the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT*. From all this, we see the full import of the apostle's doctrine in the text,—“that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” and that, without divine illumination, he cannot have the true and saving knowledge of them. And this naturally suggests the inquiry,—

IV. WHY is this? or, what is the *reason* that the natural man doth not receive, and cannot know, the things of the Spirit of God?

In answer to this, it may be observed, that one

reason why he receiveth them not is, that they are *foolishness* unto him,—chap. i. 18. The apostle James describes the wisdom of the natural man, the wise of this world, as “earthly, sensual, and devilish,”—chap. iii. 15.

It is *earthly*, inasmuch as it is circumscribed by the things of this world—it is mere worldly policy. It is *sensual*, as being influenced by the animal passions, and having no other end than the gratification of the appetites of animal nature. And it is demoniacal, or *devilish*, according to our translation, as being governed by pride, ambition, and the malignant passions of envy, hatred, and malice. Such is the estimate which an inspired apostle instructs us to make of the wisdom of this world; and if this be a correct account of its wisdom, what shall we think of its folly? This wisdom may be refined into plausible systems of morality, or what, in modern phrase, is termed MORAL PHILOSOPHY; but, after all, it is merely “the enticing or *persuasive* word of man’s wisdom”—the wisdom of this world, which is only foolishness in God’s esteem—wisdom that cometh to nought—and by the light of all which, the world knew not God. It is a remarkable circumstance attending this wisdom, that in proportion as men make proficiency in it, they become the more opposed unto the wisdom of God, as manifested in the Gospel of his Son; for the carnal mind, or wisdom of the flesh, is enmity against God,—Rom. viii. 7. The wisdom of the Jewish scribe only led him to set the Law and the Prophets in opposition to the Gospel, which was held forth in both the one and the other. And then, as to the Greek philosopher, his wisdom made him esteem those actions as the highest and most godlike virtues, which the Gospel condemns as the most diabolical vices.

Now, so long as the natural man judges of the Gospel by this kind of wisdom, it must of necessity appear “foolishness unto him;” because it is contrary to all his natural principles, from which alone he can reason;

and it is, moreover, directly opposite to his natural dispositions or propensities: he consequently esteems it a heap of absurdities, a tissue of weakness and folly, unworthy the notice of a man of sense, and what he cannot possibly receive. The doctrine of man's fallen state—the divine plan of salvation through a crucified Saviour—the nature of the salvation itself—and the sovereignty of divine grace displayed in the whole scheme, and reigning gloriously in every part of it, to the exclusion of human merit—all these are, in his view, at once unnatural and absurd: thus the Gospel plan of salvation is foolishness in his esteem.

But, further, the apostle affirms, that the natural man cannot know these things, however clearly represented to him; for this reason, “because they are spiritually discerned,”—in other words, they are discerned only by the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. By this means, and by this alone, are men made, not only to perceive the truth and reality, but also the consistency, glory, and excellency, of the whole plan of redemption, as made known in the everlasting Gospel, and to esteem it as the wisdom of God and the power of God, to the salvation of all that believe. The apostle tells us in ver. 10, that it is the “Spirit that searcheth all things, even the deep things of God,”—and it is the Spirit also that “maketh us to know the things which are freely given us of God,”—ver. 12. But the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because he is destitute of that Spirit by whom only they are made known. For, as no man knoweth the things of man, but the spirit of man which is in him; even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, and he to whom the Spirit shall reveal them,—ver. 11.

I have thus endeavoured to explain the import of the words of my text, as I understand them, and shewn you—who the apostle intends by the natural man—what are the things of the Spirit of God to which he refers—

how any of the fallen race of Adam ever do attain to the knowledge and belief of them—and also why the natural man neither does receive, nor can know these things without aid from above. Before we proceed further, it may not be amiss to offer a few remarks on the verses following the text, which to some may appear obscure. Thus I understand them: “But he that is spiritual,” or has the Spirit of God dwelling in him, “judgeth or discerneth all things,” relating to the day of salvation by Jesus Christ; “yet he himself is judged or discerned of no man,” who is destitute of the Spirit. Such persons can neither discern his true character, his principles, or his motives of action; nor are they competent judges of spiritual things, so as either to confute or instruct him: “For what natural man hath known the mind of the Lord, so as to be capable of instructing the spiritual man, who has the mind of Christ?”—ver. 15, 16. And thus understood, they appear to be of much the same import as the words of the apostle John,—1 Epis. ch. iii. ver. 6;—“*The world knoweth us not*, because it knew him not;” and ch. ii. ver. 20; “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.”

From the doctrine of the text, as now explained, we may deduce the following important inferences:—

1. That man’s natural reason, however much cultivated and improved it may be, can never find out the true and saving knowledge of the divine character. On this point, we have the decisive testimony of our apostle,—1 Cor. i. 21;—“The world by wisdom knew not God.” And yet they had the means of knowing Him; for at no time has he left himself without witness in the world; that is, without proofs of his being and attributes. His eternal power and Godhead are most clearly manifested in his works of Creation and Providence, so as to leave all Atheists without excuse; and not Atheists only, but the makers and worshippers of idols,—Rom. i. 20, 21. Yet see what human reason, and science, and philosophy, did for the Gentile world,

in the times preceding the publication of the Gospel. When Paul and his companions first went among the nations to publish the Gospel, they found the most renowned cities, Ephesus, and Corinth, and Athens, wholly given up to idolatry, and men everywhere worshipping the works of their own hands. They had lost the true knowledge of God; and as to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, their boasted reason and philosophy could afford them no aid in this all-important concern, because it is matter of pure revelation, and in itself so opposite to the natural wisdom of man, as to be foolishness unto him when revealed.

2. From the facts now stated, we may learn the necessity of the Gospel revelation, which not only recognizes all the discoveries which God has made of himself in the works of Creation and Providence, but also gives additional manifestations of his character as the God of salvation—as the Lord God, merciful and gracious—and so loving the world as to send his beloved Son into it, that guilty rebels might obtain life through him. This is the word of his grace, which he sends among the nations, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, through the ministry of reconciliation; and it comprehends all that guilty, sinful mortals need, in order to their salvation. The Spirit reveals nothing to the minds of men that is not comprised in the Gospel testimony. His agency in the economy of grace is restricted to that of causing men to understand, and believe, and know, the grand and interesting truths contained in the written word; and he never deals in private whispers and suggestions, aside from what is openly testified in the writings of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles. His office is—to take of the things that are Christ's and shew them unto men, fixing their minds upon the atonement, and filling them with all peace and joy in believing its sufficiency.

And here I think it necessary to introduce a few remarks on a “strange doctrine,” which is finding abet-



tors and propagators in the present day, to the subverting of the souls of many of the disciples; and I do not hesitate to add, to the subverting of the doctrine of the true grace of God, by making the salvation of sinful mortals to be “of him that willeth and runneth,” and not of God who sheweth mercy. I will explain myself as shortly as possible. The *heresy* to which I now refer, consists in *denying the necessity* of any divine influence, to give the word of God its proper or saving effect, in the conversion of a sinner. The persons who advocate this sentiment contend, that the written word is *the Spirit*, (and not *the sword* of the Spirit, as the apostle teaches,—Eph. vi. 17.)—that the Holy Scriptures, or writings of the New Testament, are the “drawing” of which Christ speaks,—John vi. 44; inasmuch as they contain the varied persuasions of redeeming love to come unto and believe in him, to the saving of the soul. According to this notion, when it said, that “faith is the *gift* of God,” all that is intended by the expression is, that God gives the Holy Scriptures, conveying to us the knowledge of the facts and doctrines which we are called to believe; and, consistently enough with this, they maintain, that every one who reads the Scriptures, or hears them read, has a complete ability to hear, believe, embrace, and obey, the Gospel of Christ—though dead in trespasses and sins; and, consequently, that no other divine power is needed, to open the understanding, and influence the will and affections, than what is contained in the written word; which notion the reader may compare with Ps. cx. 3. Such, in few words, is the doctrine to which I refer. It first began to be propagated, I believe, by William Cudworth, the friend and correspondent of the pious Hervey, about the middle of the last century, and it has been continued by his followers, though with little success, to the present day. Now, however, it is *beginning* to raise its head, and to meet with a more favourable reception among the people of

this country, in consequence of the importation of some modern publications from the American press, in which it occupies a conspicuous place; and it is chiefly on this account that I am induced to notice it at present. But with regard to the doctrine itself, I take leave to offer the following remarks.

This sentiment destroys the duty of prayer for a blessing on the preaching of the Gospel, or the reading of the Holy Scriptures; and this alone, were there nothing else to urge against it, is amply sufficient to demonstrate its *unscriptural*, and, consequently, its *heretical* tendency. For if no supernatural divine influence be necessary, in order to “open the understanding” of sinners, so that they may understand the Scriptures, and give them to see “the wondrous things which are contained in the divine Law,”—if the agency of the Holy Spirit be not requisite to “shine into the heart, causing light to spring up out of darkness, even the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,”—then all prayer for any such blessing is superseded, and the individual who engages in it, while holding such a sentiment, can only be mocking heaven with idle words, while he prays that God would crown his Gospel with success. But that the apostles were differently minded on this point, from the persons to whom I now refer, must be very obvious to all who read their writings with attention, and whose minds are not blinded by prejudice, or the god of this world. How often do we find these inspired teachers entreating the prayers of their Christian brethren, “that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified,”—2 Thess. iii. 1; Eph. vi. 18, 19; Col. iv. 2, 3;—acknowledging their own insufficiency for the arduous work of the ministry,—2 Cor. iii. 5;—and attributing all their success in winning souls to Christ, unto the sovereignty of divine grace,—2 Cor. ii. 14—16; 1 Cor. iii. 5—9, and chap. iv. 6, 7. When these heralds of salvation beheld the effects of

their ministry in the conversion of sinners to God, unto what did they attribute it? Why, to the hand of the Lord, that is, the Almighty power of God, accompanying the word spoken,—Acts xi. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 13. And the case remains the very same to this day; in every instance, where the Gospel gets access into the heart of a sinner, so as to turn him from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, we see the gracious promise of the Saviour fulfilled: “Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,”—Matt. xxviii. 20.

But this is not our only ground of opposition to this newly revived theory. We object to it further, because it militates against the doctrine of the divine sovereignty in the salvation of the guilty. The uniform testimony of the inspired writers is, that sinners “are saved by grace, through faith; and that faith is the gift of God, and comes through divine illumination—not of works, lest any man should boast,”—Eph. ii. 8—10. We find them, when treating of this subject, adducing the words of Jehovah himself: Rom. ix. 15—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;” and the inference which they draw from this is, that the salvation of any of the fallen race of Adam, “is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,”—ver. 16. But any one who understands the doctrine of these new teachers—the system which I am now opposing—must see, that it discards the divine sovereignty as taught by the holy apostle in all his writings, and in this chapter especially, by converting the Gospel into a self-righteous system, and making salvation to be of him that willeth and runneth, and *not* of God that sheweth mercy.

It would easy be to enlarge these remarks, were this the proper place for doing it; and, by tracing out this doctrine, in its legitimate consequences, demonstrate that it constitutes the hinge of two systems,

which would be found eventually as opposite as light and darkness. But I must content myself with having drawn your attention to it, and thrown out a few passing hints with the view of putting you on your guard against it. I now take my leave of the subject, at least for the present, by beseeching you, as you regard the glory of God, and value the salvation of your immortal souls, to beware of the error yourselves, to caution others against it, and to pray that those who have unhappily embraced it, "may recover themselves out of the infernal snare,"—2 Tim. ii. 25, 26; by speedily and earnestly seeking that guidance of the Holy Spirit of Truth, the necessity of which the foul spirit of error and delusion has led them to deny;—1 John iv. 6.

3. We may also learn from the foregoing considerations, the necessity of divine influence, or of the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, for opening the understandings of men, to understand the Scriptures, and to receive what is there revealed as given by divine inspiration—causing them to understand, and believe, and love, the saving truth, so as to receive its impress upon their hearts, and be sanctified by it. All this is above the power of nature; for the natural man receiveth it not, but reckons it foolishness, except in so far as he can adjust it to his own reason, and the bent of his own inclination, which, of necessity, must give him a corrupted view of truth. And, indeed, what is the sum total of the preaching of many in our day, who are cried up as Gospel ministers, but so much labour to accommodate the doctrines of the Gospel to the standard of human reason, and cause the offence of the cross to cease. Before a sinner can be brought to relish the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, his heart must be touched anew by the finger of God: he must be renewed in the spirit of his mind.

4. The subject under review may further serve to shew us the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinful mortals. We see the blessed God bestowing

his Spirit on some, and bringing them to the faith, while others, equally privileged in regard to the outward revelation, or means of instruction, continue in unbelief. "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is a doctrine most repugnant to human pride; but it is interwoven with the whole texture of revelation. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and compassion on whom I will have compassion," said Jehovah to his servant Moses, when He shewed him His glory. And the same doctrine rejoiced the heart of the Saviour, when, in the days of his public ministry, he said—"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." In this way, he hides pride from man, by cutting off all ground of boasting in our own knowledge and acquirements; for what has any man that he has not received, and who maketh one to differ from another? It is God that sheweth mercy.

5. This subject should lead us all to look to the blessed God for the spread of his glorious Gospel—to be instant in prayer and supplication for his blessing upon the labours of all his faithful servants, beseeching him—that his word may have free course and be glorified—that *his* hand and *power* may *accompany* the word spoken—that many may believe and turn to the Lord; in all instances ascribing the success unto him, diligently using, but never trusting to outward means, or giving to any but God, that honour which is His alone. He chooses the most unlikely instruments to declare his truth, and the most unlikely subjects on which to magnify his grace;—and this he does, in order that the excellency of the power may signally appear to be of HIM who exerts it, and not of those who make it known. HIS is the kingdom—the power is also HIS—and to HIM be all the glory. AMEN.

## SERMON XXII.

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### THE APOSTOLIC WARFARE, AND ITS WEAPONS OF AGGRESSION.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

2 Cor. x. 3—6.

To understand the scope and design of the apostle in the verses now read, it may be useful to premise a few things concerning the actual state of the church to which this epistle was addressed.

Paul himself had preached the Gospel to the Corinthians, and begotten many in that city to the faith of Christ, as you will find by turning to Acts, ch. xviii. ver. 1—11. But after his departure, certain corrupt teachers got admission among the brethren, and, by propagating unsound doctrines, they raised parties and factions in the church, and caused many of them to be disaffected to the apostle, thus intruding themselves into another man's labours, and "boasting of a state of things which had been made ready to their hands,"—2 Cor. x. 12—16. And, not content with this, they endeavoured to discredit his doctrine, by many invidious insinuations; they called in question his apostleship, and even

represented him as being actuated by carnal and unworthy motives in his ministry among them. They could not but allow that his "letters were weighty and powerful;" they were written in a high and authoritative strain; nevertheless, "his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible,"—ver. 10. It was destitute of all the graces of eloquence by which they were charmed; and, in short, he made but an insignificant appearance among such a polished people as they were.

These insinuations had too much weight with many in the Corinthian church, and the effect of them was not only to create jealousies concerning himself, but also to unsettle their own minds in the faith, and to foment disorders and schisms in the church, which they did to a very considerable extent.

To counteract this evil state of things, is the main design of the apostle in writing this second epistle, and more especially the chapter out of which I have selected the text. He enters upon the subject with an earnest entreaty, "beseeching them, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," that by their timely repentance they would spare him the pain of using the rod of discipline when he next visited them,—ver. 1, 2. And then, adverting to the base accusations of his enemies, as though he walked according to the wicked course of this world, he adds, "for though we walk in the flesh,"—that is, though we dwell in houses of clay; though we walk about in the body, being clothed in mortal flesh, and are subject to the calamities of life, even as Jesus himself was, while tabernacling among us, yet "we do not war after the flesh;" for in the whole of our conversation, ministry, and deportment, we have no secular motive—no worldly prospect in view—neither do we use any carnal weapons to accomplish our end, "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds."

To illustrate this subject a little more particularly, allow me to call your attention to the following things:—

1.—The apostle compares his ministry to a *Warfare*.  
 2.—The nature of *the Opposition* he had to encounter.  
 3.—The *Weapons* which he used in conducting this warfare. 4.—The *Success* which he had in subduing this opposition. 5.—The clear demonstration of the *Power of God* in all this. 6.—We shall then improve the subject.

I. We see that the apostle compares his ministry to a *Warfare*.

Indeed, the whole of *the Christian life* is frequently compared to a warfare in scripture; and hence Christians are exhorted to the different military duties—such as to “put on the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil—to *wrestle* against flesh and blood—having their loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of righteousness—above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby they may quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,”—Eph. vi. 11, 12. So the apostle exhorted these Corinthians: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong,”—1 Cor. xvi. 13. They are to “fight the good fight of faith,” in order that they may “lay hold of eternal life,”—1 Tim. vi. 12. But the apostle, in our text, has more particularly in view *the Christian ministry*, which he holds forth under the similitude of a warfare. Agreeably to which he thus addresses Timothy, who was engaged in the exercise of that ministry: “Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”—“Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”—“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier,”—2 Tim. ii. 1—4.

In this warfare, there are many difficulties to be sur-



mounted, much hardship to be endured, and various dangers to be encountered, with a host of formidable enemies to overcome—such as the world, the flesh, and the devil. This world is in a state of rebellion against its lawful sovereign, and “lieth in the wicked one.” Man, by nature, is “dead in trespasses and sins”—“walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others,”—Eph. ii. 1—3. Such is the apostolic testimony concerning the state of the unbelieving world, and it applies to both Jew and Gentile, who are equally fallen and depraved—the subjects of sin, and exposed to misery and ruin—“without hope and without God in the world.”

The apostles, in their ministry, had to encounter all the prejudices of education, together with all the corrupt inclinations and bad passions of men. The Gentile nations, in particular, in that day, were immersed in the grossest darkness as to spiritual things—they had lost the knowledge of the true God, and were ignorantly worshipping the work of their own hands. They had to wage war against idolatry, superstition, and spiritual wickedness in high places. So when Paul was called to the Christian ministry, the Lord Jesus thus addressed him: “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness; and now I send thee unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified, through faith in me.” These things lead me to remark,—

II. That the *Opposition* which the apostles had to

encounter in this warfare was *very great*. It is compared in my text to “strong holds,” or fortifications defended by impregnable walls and ramparts,—ver. 4. And this suggests to us an awful fact, namely, that the human heart, by nature, is in a state of hostility and opposition against God, and strongly fortified against the Gospel of peace and reconciliation. These things he describes in ver. 5, under the significant terms, “imagination,” or rather, as the original imports, “reasonings,” and “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” In fact, the carnal mind is declared in Scripture to be enmity against God; it is not subject to his law, neither, indeed, *can it be*.” But the question recurs: “Wherein does this alienation of the heart consist? what are these presumptuous “reasonings,” to which the apostle refers in the text, and whereby the sinner’s heart is fortified against God?” Now, in answer to this enquiry, I observe,—

1. That the human heart is naturally fortified against God by *culpable ignorance*. Sinful man does not *like* to retain the knowledge of the character of the true God in his mind. The apostle Paul treats of this subject in his epistle to the Romans,—chap. i. He declares that God hath, in the works of his Creation and Providence, made such a discovery of his character and perfections as to leave, without excuse, those who neglect to “worship him, and give him the glory due unto his name,”—ver. 20, 21. But notwithstanding this, men became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened; for they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,—ver. 28; and thus they became *willingly ignorant* of the character of the true God.

But men are also naturally ignorant of the real state and condition of *their own character*—of their guilty, helpless, and miserable state, and so they are totally insensible of their need of salvation. And even of those who have heard the Gospel, how many continue ignorant of the way of salvation,—the god of this world

blinding their minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them,—2 Cor. iv. 4. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.” Thus they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts,”—Eph. iv. 18.

2. The human heart is naturally fortified by *strong prejudices*, that is, by false and erroneous sentiments, which pre-occupy the judgment, and bar it against the truth. The mind of man is not ignorant in such a sense, as to be void of all principles; for were that the case, man, in his natural state, would not be the subject of just blame; but it is stored with wrong principles, and with sentiments which are opposite to the true knowledge of God. The wisdom of this world is described by an apostle as earthly, sensual, devilish: it is enmity against God, and it furnishes and supports those imaginations, or reasonings, against the Gospel, spoken of in the text, concluding it to be *foolishness*. The wisdom of the Greek philosopher comes under this description; it is but vain deceit at the best, the wisdom of this world, which cometh to nought. It is the wisdom of the scribe, and the disputer of this world—the wisdom of the wise men after the flesh. All the reasoning of the natural man either opposes the Gospel *directly*, or it is employed in accommodating it to man’s natural notions and conceptions of things, and thus converting it into a scheme of self-indulgence, or self-dependance.

3. The heart of a sinner is fortified against the Gospel, by *evil dispositions and worldly lusts*.

The Gospel is a “doctrine according to godliness,” and it strikes against every corrupt disposition and favourite lust. And not only so; it claims our supreme regard and cordial reception, as the “ONE THING NEEDFUL,” and condemns every undue attachment even to such things of this world as are lawful in themselves,—such as food and raiment, natural connexions, and even life itself.

This the natural man considers to be very unreasonable, and even intolerable; because he has no satisfaction but in the things of this life, and hence he considers the Gospel to be inimical to his happiness. Hence he is *averse* to it, and loves darkness rather than light. His carnal mind is "enmity against God," because his heart is supremely set upon opposite objects; and this is another source of reasoning against the Gospel. To illustrate this a little:—

The *covetous* man reasons, that it is more his immediate duty to mind his farm and his merchandize, and honestly to lay up treasures for himself on earth, than to attend to the Gospel; because his happiness consists in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The *voluptuary*—the man of pleasure, dissipation, and softness,—reasons, that natural desires are implanted by the Creator; consequently, that they are lawful, and ought to be gratified: to enjoy is to obey. Hence the indulgence of his sensual appetites is with him the first object of pursuit: "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" This is the religion of the Epicurean.

Again:—The *ambitious* man reasons, that fame and renown are the noblest pursuits of a rational being; and that, if the Gospel means to extinguish such pursuits—to depress this noble emulation—it can have no other tendency than to debase and sink the human mind; forgetting or overlooking the fact, that the way to the attainment of true glory, is to become a follower of Him, who was meek and lowly in heart, and who, while he tabernacled among us, was the servant of all.

Further:—The *self-righteous* person reasons, that surely the state of man is not so sinful and desperate, and so utterly hopeless, as the Scriptures represent it—that God is not so strict—that his law is not so holy—that his own heart is not so wicked—nor his obedience so

deficient—as the Gospel represents ; and, therefore, that there is no such absolute need of the doctrine of sovereign grace, and of the salvation of Christ, as should lead him to receive for truth, so very humbling and questionable a doctrine as that of the cross.

Now all these are “reasonings,” presumptuous imaginations—“high things” which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and by means of which the hearts of sinful mortals are fortified against Christ and his Gospel ; and it was against these things that the apostles had to conduct a spiritual warfare, according to the words of the text.

III. Let us now consider the *Weapons* which the apostles used in order to subdue and vanquish this formidable opposition in the human heart.

The inspired writer commences with a negative description of them : “The weapons of our warfare,” he declares, “are *not carnal*.” Of such weapons as are carnal, there are various kinds ; and though we cannot stop to enumerate them all on the present occasion, we may, nevertheless, glance at a few of the most common, to which recourse is had in our day.

There is *the sword* of the civil magistrate. This is the great weapon with the church of Rome in making Christians ; and all *national* establishments of religion have more or less recourse to the same unhallowed means. The apostles, however, never availed themselves of this instrument of conversion ; for, in fact, it was perpetually exercised *against* themselves ; and were it not so, they were too well instructed into the nature of their Lord’s kingdom, and the revelation of his will, even to wish its aid. They well knew that this *carnal* weapon was only calculated to do violence to the bodies of men ; but that it would have no influence whatever in changing the heart. It might multiply hypocrites, as it often has done ; but it never could convert one soul to God. They knew that their

Lord had discharged it, as having nothing to do in the affairs of his kingdom, and prohibited its use by others,—John xviii. 36; Matt. xxvi. 52.

Further, the apostles never had recourse to *worldly motives* and inducements to influence men's minds, or to persuade and entice them to make the Christian profession. "Their speech and their preaching was not with persuasive words of man's wisdom"; they did not avail themselves of the arts of oratory, or that "excellency of speech," which was so fascinating to the multitude in their day. At no time did they use flattering words to humour the pride of men. They did not walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully, corrupting and accommodating it to the lusts of men, like the false teachers of the times, who were of the world, and spake of the world, and whom, consequently, the world heard and followed. They did not suit their doctrine to men's carnal inclinations, either with the view of collecting a party, or of retaining one that was already gathered. All these are carnal weapons, which the apostles never had recourse to, and by which they well knew they never could subdue one subject to Christ, but which, on the contrary, must fortify men in their rebellion against him.

What, then, it may be asked, were the weapons of the apostolic warfare? If they could neither exercise violence towards the bodies of men, nor affect their minds with the fears and hopes of this world,—which, indeed, are the only things that have any weight with men in an unrenewed state,—what power or force could they have in the spiritual war? These weapons, whatever they consisted of, must surely have been very weak and ineffectual! And did they not so appear in use?

Quite the reverse, says this "good soldier of Jesus Christ,"—but "MIGHTY THROUGH GOD, to the pulling down of strong holds." Now, we all know, that the most weighty and powerful weapons of war are employed

in beating down fortresses, and demolishing the walls of a citadel; and to such he compares the energy and power of the weapons which he used in the Christian warfare. What then were they? Why, they were *the doctrines and motives of the Gospel*, accompanied by such a conversation as became it. They wielded, not the material sword, but the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This they handled, by manifestation of THE TRUTH, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. They fought the good fight of faith, under many privations and hardships—"by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned: by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,"—2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Such were their weapons, both for subduing enemies and reclaiming backsliders.

They set before men their lost and undone state by nature and practice; at the same time exhibiting the full and free salvation which there is, through Christ Jesus, for the very chief of sinners; and they plied both the hopes and fears of men, by a consideration of the amazing grace of God on the one hand, and by the terrors of the Lord on the other; whilst they confirmed their doctrine by miracles, by an appeal to prophecies then fulfilled, by the purity of their lives, and by their patient suffering for Christ's sake. These spiritual weapons, though they neither did violence to men's bodies, nor affected their minds with the hopes and fears of *this* life; yet they were MIGHTY, and their force is compared, not to that of a bow, a sword, or a spear, but to battering rams and cannon; to the most weighty and irresistible engines of war, which are used for knocking down fortifications, and levelling impregnable fortresses with the ground. For the word of God has the energy of a fire and hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces,—Jer. xxxiii. 29.

IV. I remark, that the *success* which attended the preaching of the apostles and crowned their warfare, was of God. The weapons which they used were MIGHTY; but it was not owing to the wisdom, the eloquence, or the ability, of those who used them—it was solely THROUGH GOD. The instruments which HE chose for this warfare, were such as the men of this world esteemed foolish, base, weak, and despicable,—1 Cor. i. 27, &c. They had the treasure of the Gospel in earthen vessels—not vessels of gold or of brass—that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of those by whom it was ministered,—2 Cor. iv. 7. *They* were but as the sound of the ram's horns at the taking of Jericho,—Heb. xi. 30; or the earthen pitchers which contributed to Gideon's victory,—Judg. vii. 19, 20; in both which instances, the excellency of the power was entirely of God, and not of men.

The preaching of Christ crucified, though a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, is the *power* of God, and the *wisdom* of God, to the salvation of all who are called,—1 Cor. i. 23. There is a wonderful adaptation and suitableness in it to produce the most glorious effects upon the human heart, and the most extraordinary things are ascribed to it in the word of God. It presents to the sinner's view the most sublime discoveries of the character and perfections of the blessed God, whereby it enlightens the understanding, rectifies the judgment, and engages the affections; it fills the soul with light, and peace, and consolation, and hope; it pours the love of God into the heart, and, by its transforming efficacy, changes it into the divine image; so that they who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord. The doctrine of Christ crucified is THE TRUTH, which sanctifies and saves. It is the Testimony of God, together with the concurring influence of his Holy Spirit, exerting his Almighty power in removing the darkness, counteracting the prejudices, and overcoming the aversion of the sinner's heart—causing the Gospel to be understood, and



believed, and loved, and obeyed—thus bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. But all this is the effect of divine influence; Paul may plant, and Apollos water: it is God alone that can give the increase. He grants success to the word of his grace, giving it the energy of a fire and a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. And hence,

V. The success of the Gospel in the world, is a clear demonstration of its truth, and of the power of God attending it.

That the Gospel, at its first publication, was wonderfully successful, is a fact that admits of no dispute. When Jesus of Nazareth called the fishermen of Galilee from their occupation, he promised to make them “fishers of men:” and he was faithful to his promise. Even in the city of Jerusalem, where he himself was crucified, thousands were converted under one sermon; and from Jerusalem the word of the Lord was sounded out in every direction—not only in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, but by the ministry of Paul and his companions through the Gentile countries; and with such rapidity and to such an extent did it spread, that we find the apostle comparing its progress to that of the heavenly luminaries,—“their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world;” which filled the apostle’s heart with rapture, and led him to exclaim: “Now thanks be unto God, which every where causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.” Multitudes, in all countries, became obedient to the faith; they cast their idols to the moles and the bats; churches were gathered by the ministry of the word; and with astonishing celerity the doctrine of the cross overspread the most populous countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The Greeks and Jews, the learn'd and rude,  
Were by these heavenly arms subdu'd;  
While Satan rages at his loss,  
And hates the doctrine of the cross.

And if we consider that all this was effected by men without power, influence, learning, or eloquence; yea, in opposition to all that riches, authority, and worldly power could do to counteract it, we must surely admit that the finger of God was there.

It was indeed his own gracious promise, that his word "should not return to him void of success; but that it should prosper in the thing whereunto he had appointed it,"—Isa. lv. 10, 11; and the event justified the prediction. The preaching of the Gospel is the means which he has appointed for gathering in his elect, and accomplishing his saving purposes; and as his veracity stands pledged to give it success, we ought not to doubt his faithfulness, or distrust its efficacy, whatever obstacles may lie in the way: for what is there that Omnipotence cannot accomplish? or, is there any thing too hard for God?

From the subject which we have now had under consideration, some useful lessons of instruction may be deduced by the disciples of the Saviour, whether as individuals or churches. It may teach them the futility and unscriptural tendency of much of that machinery or "frame-work," now resorted to for the purpose of propagating Christianity, and of many of the plans now in vogue for multiplying the number of members of churches, which have such an imposing aspect in the eyes of the multitude. Among these I should be disposed, and I think without any breach of charity, to class the modern practice of promoting, what are called, "Revivals of Religion," by means of camp-meetings, the ostensible object of which is, to bring fire from heaven, the effect of mere animal excitement. Hence, the altars, anxious seats, mourning benches, &c. &c., of late so prevalent in the United States, and from thence imported into our own country—a method of "getting religion" totally unauthorized by the Holy Scriptures. These are "carnal weapons," and to everything of this kind we may confidently

apply the words of the Father of Lights, as given by the prophet Isaiah, chap. l. 11: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have at mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." The apostles, simple souls, were utter strangers to all this modern fanaticism. They had no idea of making Christians in any other way than by bearing their testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, and adducing the evidence which supported his claims, at the same time humbly and earnestly imploring the blessing of heaven on their labours. They preached the Gospel, not with excellency of speech, or the wisdom of the schools. They disclaimed the use of all human art and learning. It was not by means of oratory, or the flowery ornaments of rhetoric, they sought to turn the heart, lest the faith of their converts should stand in the wisdom of men, instead of the power of God; and this they did to cut off all pretence for glorying in men. They preached the Gospel purely, without alloy—faithfully, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God—and with such plainness of address as made it level to every capacity; and when they found their preaching crowned with success, their language was: "Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."—"Paul may plant, and Apollos water: it is God only can give the increase."

And may I not include among the "carnal weapons," which are now so generally resorted to, even by our strictest dissenters, for destroying the strong holds of the god of this world, the system of academical education, now almost universally prevalent among those, who profess to be the followers of "the fishermen of Galilee?" In this we have a striking display of the wisdom of man, as contrasted with the wisdom of God. In our day of refinement and superior light and luxury, nothing will go down but a "learned," or at least a "well-educated ministry!" Undoubtedly, human

learning is valuable, in various respects; and when sanctified by "an unction from the Holy One," its importance can scarcely be over-rated: but to place it in the light of a *necessary* qualification for preaching the Gospel, or taking the oversight of a Christian church, is most egregiously to mistake its station. What, I would ask, has classical literature to do either with pointing sinful mortals to the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"—or with "rightly dividing the word of truth?" And then see its effects on the generality of those, who have been trained up in our dissenting colleges. Bring their characters, when matured by a three or four years noviciate, to the standard of the New Testament, and compare them with the qualifications there laid down for Bishops, Elders, Pastors, and Teachers,—1 Tim. iii. 1—7; Titus i. 5—11; to say nothing of the example and precepts of Paul, in Acts xx. 17—35; and where is the similarity to be found? But I cannot now dwell on this subject, and therefore dismiss it with remarking, that the whole system is radically wrong; it is an entire departure from that which is delineated in the New Testament, particularly in Eph. iv. 11—16; 1 Peter v; 1 Thes. ii; 1 Cor. iv; and its fruits, (which are manifest in the constitution and order of the churches of the present day,) bear scarcely any resemblance to what we read of in the churches planted by the apostles of our Lord, under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. Any one who reads the New Testament, with due attention to its scope, and the leading design of the writers, must be aware, how extremely jealous those holy men were of the honours of divine grace, and how fearful of everything that could derogate, even in the slightest degree, from the glory of their Redeemer's kingdom, as an economy wholly spiritual and heavenly. "We have this treasure," say they, "in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

## SERMON XXIII.

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### THE DIVINE GLORY MANIFESTED IN THE BUILDING UP OF ZION.

*When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory: He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.*

Psalm cii. 16, 17.

IT does not appear very certain by whom this Psalm was written, nor at what precise time. But from a careful examination of its contents, we should be led to infer, that it must have been composed during the time of the Babylonish captivity; and if so, the writer was, in all probability, Jeremiah, or Daniel, or some other of the cotemporary prophets. Whoever it was, he evidently *personates* the church of God, whose members during the period of the captivity, when Zion was bereft of her sons,—“sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept,” bewailing, in sackcloth and ashes, her desolate and forlorn state. In the first and second verses, he calls upon God to hear his prayer, and to answer him speedily; he then most pathetically complains of the desolation of Jerusalem,—ver. 3—7, and is sensibly touched with the taunts and insulting language of the enemy,—ver. 8; and, in the three following verses, he describes the abject state to which Zion was reduced. But amidst all this scene of affliction and

wo, one source of consolation remains, and that is deduced from a consideration of the *eternity of God*,—ver. 12, and of the gracious promises which he has made, that he would not utterly abandon his church, but that he would have mercy upon Zion at the appointed time. He describes the pleasure which his servants took in her stones, and then breaks out in triumph at the recollection that the Gentiles, or heathen, were to be blessed with the knowledge of the truth, and thus become subjects of the Messiah's kingdom. He felt that this would be a glorious accession to the church of God; and by means of it, Zion would be raised from the dust and become a praise in all the earth, and that all the kings of the earth would see her glory, or the glory of her God. Looking forward with joyful anticipations to that period, and concentrating his views upon it, the inspired writer at length breaks out, as it were, into a rapture at the discoveries of the divine character which should then be made, as in the words of my text: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory: He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

To illustrate the text a little, and assist your meditations upon it, I propose to consider,

I.—What we are to understand by ZION in this place. II.—To shew that she is the object of the divine regards, and that the Lord has promised to *build her up*. III.—To consider *how* that is *effected*; and then to conclude by noticing, —The peculiar *glory of the Lord*, which appears in that work.

I. As to the import of the term ZION, in my text, it is scarcely necessary to tell you, that not only here, but in a great variety of other places in the prophetic writings, it is used metaphorically, to denote the church of God, or whole company of the redeemed; and the allusion is to a certain hill, or mount, in Jerusalem, on which the city of David was formerly built. Ob-

serve the description that is given of it in Psalm *xlvi*. 2: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king." Such was the literal Mount Zion, on which David, the king of Israel, built his palace, and on which account, it was called—"the city of David."

But the term Zion is sometimes taken to denote the temple at Jerusalem, though the latter was built on Mount Moriah, which was situated contiguous to Mount Zion. See, for proof of this, the eighty-seventh Psalm: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob: Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God. Of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her, and the highest himself shall establish her." Here, you see, it denotes the temple, with all its appendages of worship, as it doth also in Psalm *lxxxiv*. 7. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." This Zion, however, was only a type, or emblem, of things under the New Covenant, or Gospel dispensation.

In like manner, if we carefully attend to the apostolic writings, we shall find, that Mount Zion is there taken to denote the whole church of the redeemed, both in heaven and on earth—the city of David's Lord. In this sense the apostle Paul uses the term in Heb. *xii*. 22. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant. This is the universal or Catholic church, including all the redeemed. But then that part of this universal church, which is on earth, is subdivided into numerous branches, consisting of distinct assemblies of believers, such as were the churches of Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, &c. in the

days of the apostles; and each of these is termed, in scripture, "a dwelling place of Mount Zion,"—Isa. iv. 5; "the house of God,"—1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. iii. 6; his "temple or building,"—2 Cor. vi. 16; a "habitation of God through the Spirit,"—Eph. ii. 22. This view of the royal mount leads me to observe,—

II. That Zion, or the true church of God, is the peculiar object of Jehovah's favour, and that he has promised his protection and blessing to her.

The writings of the prophets abound with intimations of that delightful fact. I will quote a few passages to this effect. Thus, Psalm cxxxii. 13—18. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation; this is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish." Hear also the prophet Isaiah,—chap. xlix. "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. But Zion said,—The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?—Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me,"—ver. 13—15. Zion is then called upon to "lift up her eyes round about," and contemplate the Gentiles flocking to her, and in such numbers that the place is too strait for them to dwell in. And it is then promised her, that "kings shall be her nursing fathers, and their queens her nursing mothers: that they shall bow down to her with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of



her feet:" and it is added "thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me,"—ver. 23. The subject is resumed in the fifty-fourth chapter, where Zion is called upon to enlarge the place of her tent, and stretch forth the curtains of her habitations or dwelling places: to lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, for that she should break forth on the right hand and on the left, and that her seed should inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited,—ver. 2, 3. She is reminded that her Maker is her husband—the Lord of hosts—the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth,—ver. 6. And in what consoling strains does this gracious Being then address her: "In a little wrath, I hid my face from them for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee,"—ver. 9, 10

But probably the grandest and most sublime prophecy that is given us of this subject in all the Old Testament writings, is contained in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, the whole of which ought to be read in connexion: you may look, however, at the fourteenth and following verses: "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou

shalt know that I, the LORD, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob,"—ver. 14—16.

The language of the New Testament is in perfect accordance with all this: it bears the same benign and encouraging aspect to the children of Zion. There we hear the "Saviour and the Redeemer" declaring his love to his church, and assuring her, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her,"—Matt. xvi. 18; and that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, there will HE be in the midst of them,—chap. xviii. 20. There we find him encouraging his disciples to walk in his ways, observe his precepts, and keep his commands, by the promise of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, and by assurances of the enjoyment of his own and his Father's love. "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive,"—John xvi. 15—17. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you,"—ver. 21, 27. To which let me add, what is written in 2 Cor. vi. 16,—"Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

III. I come next to show, what we are to understand by the Lord's *building up Zion*, and the *means* by which this is effected.

Now to enter properly into this subject, it must be constantly and carefully kept in mind, that the inspired writers, both prophets and apostles, when treating of Zion, or the church of God, speak of it as a temple, house, or building, of which the Lord Jesus

Christ is said to be the foundation, or corner stone. Thus saith the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation,"—chap. xxviii. 16. The apostle Peter quotes this text, and gives a grand illustration of it. He terms the Saviour "a *living* stone, though disallowed of men, yet chosen of God and precious;" and believers he speaks of as *lively* stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,"—1 Peter ii. 4, 5: he then quotes the above-cited words of the prophet Isaiah. The apostle Paul thus addressed the church of the Ephesians: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an *holy temple* in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,"—Eph. ii. 19—22. If now you keep in mind that Zion, or the true church of God, is presented to our view, by the Holy Spirit, under the metaphor of a temple, and that believers are the stones of which this house or temple is composed, you will find no difficulty in understanding *how* it is, that the Lord builds up Zion, or the church. It is by bringing men to the faith, and adding them to his churches. And this is the Lord's own work, though he condescends to make use of human instruments, to carry his gracious designs into execution.

In proof of what has been now said, allow me to quote a remarkable testimony from the prophet Zechariah: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory; and he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest

upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both,"—Zech. vi. 12, 13. While this passage is before us, permit me to caution you against a very popular error, which is very current in the religious world respecting it. Those who are fond of meddling with the divine decrees, and who are incessantly haranguing about a covenant between the Father and the Son made in eternity, refer us to this text in proof of it, quoting the last clause of ver. 13—"the counsel of peace shall be between them both;" that is, as they tell us, between the Father and the Son. But this is a mistaken view of the meaning of the passage. Look at the text again, and you will find, that the prophet is speaking of the Messiah, who according to Isaiah xi. 1, was to grow out of the roots of Jesse, and build the temple of the Lord; and he then speaks of the offices which he should fill, answerable to this grand and noble undertaking, namely, those of *king* and *priest*. "He shall sit and rule upon his throne," says the prophet; for "God shall set him as KING upon his holy hill of Zion,"—Psalm ii. and cx,—and not only so, says the prophet, but he shall also be "a Priest upon his throne," under which view he is exhibited to us in the apostolic writings, and in the Apocalypse more especially; and "the counsel of peace," or ministry of reconciliation, shall be between these two offices. Now a little attention to this subject will serve to explain to us, *how* it is that the Lord builds up Zion.

1. In the discharge of his priestly office, the Lord Jesus made atonement for the sins of his guilty people, putting them away by the sacrifice of himself; for his shed blood was the ransom price of man's redemption. He thus became "our peace," or peace-offering; for in his great work of atonement and sacrifice, God, as the moral governor of the world, is well pleased; his justice hath found satisfaction for the dishonour done to the divine law by the sins of men; and as a proof of this, Jesus was raised from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and ex-

alted to the highest glory in the heavens, as the reward of his obedience and death. All authority and power are committed into his hands, both in heaven and on earth: he has power to give eternal life to the heirs of salvation, and power also to raise the dead and judge the world.

2. When Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, he was made HEAD over all things to the church which is his body—head as to dominion and rule, and head also as to vital influence; for it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell: and thus he became, in all respects, qualified for the building up of Zion, the Temple of the Lord. The church is his purchased possession—the purchase of his blood. He ascended up on high, that he might fill all things, and give gifts unto men,—Eph. iv. Before he left the earth, he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world, and preach his Gospel to every creature; and having taken his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as King on God's holy hill of Zion, he sent down the Holy Spirit to fit and qualify men for testifying the Gospel of his grace, to which, by the influence of the same Spirit, he gave effect. The hand and power of God accompanied the word spoken, and many believed and turned to the Lord. You all know what took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, in all the fulness of the ascended Saviour, and thousands were converted to the faith—baptized without delay in the Name of the divine Three—and forthwith added to the church. This was the Lord's doing, and in this way he *began* to build up Zion, by *Jewish* converts. In process of time, the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles; first, indeed, by the apostle Peter's preaching to Cornelius and his household, but more abundantly afterwards by that of Paul and his companions; and now converts began to flock to Zion, "like doves upon the wing." This was the set time for favouring Zion—the Lord arose and had mercy upon her—the servants of

God took pleasure in her stones, and favoured the dust thereof; thus the heathen were led to fear the name of the Lord; and, in due time, all the kings of the earth shall see his glory.

3. But there is one thing included in the Lord's building up Zion, which merits a more particular notice than has yet been bestowed on it in this discourse—and that is, his *raising up and qualifying men for the work of the ministry—the perfecting of the saints—and the edifying of the mystical body of Christ*. Pastors and teachers are *his gifts*, and so are faithful deacons. The bestowal of such gifts is one important end for which the Saviour ascended up on high. All the endowments of the mind which capacitate a man for the work of the ministry, are conferred upon him by the glorified head of the church, such as, a knowledge of the saving truth, and ability to communicate instruction to others, or *an aptness to teach*,—an inclination to devote his talents to the service of Christ in the ministration of the word and ordinances—a capacity for ruling the house of God, so that everything shall be done *decently and in order*. All these things are matters of unspeakable importance, but it is Christ who gives men such qualifications, and the whole are included in his building up Zion. A Christian church is not a rude mass of materials loosely thrown together, without order, symmetry, or regularity; but it consists of polished stones, fitly joined together after the similitude of a palace, and growing unto an holy temple in the Lord—an habitation for God himself to dwell in through the Spirit.

My brethren, this is a subject of more importance than, I fear, we are apt to imagine. Need I remind you of our Lord's word's while engaged in his public ministry? He contemplated his disciples scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd: and what were his reflections? "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest,"—Matt. ix. 37. We are also reminded of the

promise of God, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, chap. iii. 15,—“I will give you pastors after mine own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” The work assigned to elders or pastors abundantly shows the high importance of the office or station they sustain, viz. “to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood;” and the reward promised to those who discharge its duties faithfully: “When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away,”—1 Pet. v. 3. “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves,”—1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

I am quite aware, that some in our day are of opinion, that churches may and ought to do everything while destitute of pastors or elders, which is incumbent upon those who are privileged with them; but this is to be wise above what is written; and it certainly was not in this way that the primitive disciples shewed their reverence for the authority of their ascended Sovereign!

But, waiving further remarks on this point, I proceed to observe, that, during the reign of Antichrist, the ways of Zion mourned as if all was lost; the man of sin scattered the power of the holy people, according to the prophecy of Daniel; the woman, or true church, fled into the wilderness, for a thousand, two hundred, and sixty years; and this was a dismal and dreary period for the children of Zion. But the time to favour Zion once more arrived, the witnesses which had been prophesying in sackcloth and ashes, again came forth with their testimony to the truth, and against every corruption of it, and churches again began to be formed after the apostolic pattern, and the glorious work is yet going on. The Lord sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, and makes a willing people in the day of his

power; and thus he will proceed until the whole earth be filled with his glory, and Jerusalem is made a praise in all the earth,—until the kingdoms of this world become our Lord's and his Christ's, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

But you must permit me, while on this subject, to guard you against falling into a mistake. You must not confound any particular church with the universal church of God; so as to suppose, that what applies to one will always hold good of the other. For instance, a particular church may decline, while Zion, the universal church, increases. The Lord may remove the candlestick from one place to plant it in another. When particular churches grow lukewarm and indifferent, and leave their first love, what is more right, and fit, and just, than that the Lord should punish them, by removing the candlestick, as he has often done, and planting it elsewhere,—Luke xvii. 20—24. The second and third chapters of the Revelation are full of instruction on this point. Where are now the seven churches of Asia? *They* were of the Lord's right hand planting, by the ministry of his apostles, and like the churches of Galatia, they ran well for a time; but, as they declined from their first love, and became lax in discipline, lukewarm and indifferent about the cause of the Saviour, and negligent of the Lord's calls to repentance, he withdrew his special presence from them, and gave them up to Mahomedan delusions. We come now to notice,—

IV. That peculiar manifestation of the *divine glory* which is made to appear in the building up of Zion, and which is emphatically expressed in the text,—ver. 17. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer:” in this the glory of God was especially to appear.

We all know, I presume, that the glory of God denotes the effulgence, or shining forth, of his perfec-



tions in some of his works or ways; and to manifest his glory is to make known his character to his intelligent creation, which is the ultimate end of all his actions. Discoveries of the divine glory are made in the works of Creation and Providence, and much of his character may be learnt from an attentive study of his works,—Psalm xix; Rom. i. These shew his name to be excellent in all the earth, and that he has set his glory above the heavens,—Psalm viii. But the grandest manifestation of his glory, that ever was made to men or angels, appears in the building up of Zion; for here he discovers himself to rebels against his government, as the Father of mercies, and the God of all grace and consolation—“The Lord God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.” His dealings with Israel of old, present us with many striking displays of the divine character. Moses witnessed a stupendous manifestation of the Most High, when he divided the waters of the Red Sea; and, having led his people through them as upon dry land, commanded the waters to return, and overwhelm Pharaoh and his host. He had the most signal proofs of his providential care of his people during the forty years that he led them in the wilderness, and fed them with manna from the skies. Yet Moses thought there was more of God to be seen and known, than anything he had yet discovered; and hence we find him a little before his death putting up this request to God: “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,”—Ex. xxxiii. 18; and what was the answer? “I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be *gracious* to whom I *will* be gracious, and will shew *mercy* on whom I *will* shew mercy,”—ver. 19. Now the inference which I think we are authorized to deduce from this interesting portion of Old Testament history is this—that Jehovah himself

makes more account of his goodness and sovereignty, as a manifestation of his glory, than he does of his power and wisdom—and that the highest expression of his goodness consists in his shewing the most free and unmerited mercy to rebels that deserved his wrath.

And is not this the doctrine taught in my text? “When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory—he will *regard the prayer of the destitute*, and not despise their prayer.” But who, you will ask me, are the *destitute*? These must be some favoured individuals who have qualified themselves for the reception of his favour by a round of religious duties! And, so, indeed, many would tell you; but hear, I beseech you, the explanation that is given by the great Prophet of the Christian church. “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men,—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” Here is the man who had qualified himself, as he thought, for the reception of the divine favour; on so worthy a character, many in our day would think it was fit, and meet, and proper, that God should bestow his grace. Well! but let us observe what follows. “And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!”—Luke xviii. 10—13. Here you have the prayer of the *destitute*; and it may be worth your while to pause and compare it with the prayer of the Pharisee. The latter, you see, had much to say about his fine character—how decent and moral he was in his deportment—how exempt from the vices that disgraced many of his neighbours—and how much superior he was to the poor Publican who stood within his view. “*He* fasted twice in the week, and gave tithes of all he

possessed." But mark the prayer of the Publican! He has not a word to utter on any of these points: he views himself as a mere sinner—helpless, hopeless, self-condemned; for he blushed to lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast; and deeply convinced that he deserved to perish, his only petition was—"God be merciful to me a sinner." But it was the prayer of faith; he was persuaded that there was mercy with God, through the propitiation, the atoning blood of the great High Priest; and in the confidence of that, drawing near to a throne of grace, his prayer met with a favourable acceptance—"he went down to his house justified," that is, pardoned and accepted, while the Pharisee was rejected; and the reason assigned is, that "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

And now, having glanced at this instructive parable, and particularly at the prayer of the Publican, suffer me to detain you a few moments longer upon it. You may see that the burden of his plea is *mercy*. But did you ever think seriously what mercy is? It means, in common language, pity shewn to the miserable for pity's sake. Strictly speaking, it ceases to be mercy, if the miserable have any claim upon us—it then takes the character of justice. To illustrate this point I may remark, that when I help a neighbour in his distress, who has before helped me in mine, I can hardly be called merciful; I am only just, for I am merely paying a debt. But let me stretch forth the helping hand to a man who has injured me, or to some wretched stranger whom I have never before seen, justice has nothing to do with the matter; I am then shewing mercy.

This, now, is the scriptural idea of divine mercy. It signifies God's kindness extended to miserable man of God's own rich and pure goodness. And because sin is our chief misery, mercy generally signifies the par-

don of our sins—the free pardon of them—pardon granted us, not as is sometimes said, when we deserve pardon, but when we are altogether undeserving of it; when we can no more find any thing in us to recommend us to God's favour, than we can find holiness in sin, or brightness in midnight. Mercy has its origin in the depths of Jehovah's own soul. His soul is ever full of it, even to overflowing. It wants nothing in man to give it existence, and nothing save misery in man to draw it forth. It flows from him with as little respect to our deservings, as the sun's light has to the world's darkness, or the shower's of heaven to the earth's drought. Even the sacrifice of Christ, through which it comes to us, adds nothing to it. It is only a glorious channel which the mighty stream has made for itself through mountains of difficulties, that it may reach our miseries. God loved us, he was mercifully inclined towards us, and because he was so, "He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Now, to sum up what has been said on this subject—the blessed God is unspeakably glorious in all his works and ways; but the highest manifestation of his glory is to be seen in the methods of his grace—in his dealings with the church, or Zion; there it is that the holy angels, those sons of light which surround the throne of God and of the Lamb, study his character—it is by means of the church that they "learn the manifold wisdom of God." His works of Creation and Providence display his wisdom, power, and goodness; and when he called the universe into existence, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." But when he began to build up Zion, by the Eternal Word assuming human nature; when they beheld God incarnate, though only a babe at Bethlehem, they sang: "Glory to God *in the highest*—on earth peace, good-will to men." Here they obtained a new view of his character, as the *God of grace*, redeeming a lost world

from wrath and condemnation, and providing a revenue of eternal praise and glory from myriads of fallen beings like ourselves, who, as the purchase of Immanuel's blood, are prepared and brought to the enjoyment of eternal glory,—Heb. ii. 10.

1. The subject we have had under consideration is full of instruction to us all. It speaks aloud to those who are going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God. Is there an individual of this class present? If so, I beseech you to consider well what you are engaged in! You are offering an affront to the Majesty of heaven—you are pouring contempt upon that salvation which the blessed God has provided, at the immense price of the precious life's blood of his own beloved and only begotten Son. You are attempting to do that which has been already done by Him; and, rejecting his mediation, even your prayers are an abomination in his Father's sight. If you obtain an interest in the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory, you must renounce your own righteousness, as the apostle Paul did—incline your ear to the testimony which God has given of his Son—and hear him declaring his entire satisfaction in that Son's perfect obedience and finished work: and believing this, you will then, however destitute, in due time *enter into rest*. This faith will qualify you for true Christian obedience—it will lead you to take up your cross and follow Christ—to be baptized in his name—to walk in the ways of his appointment—and to become a companion with others in the kingdom and patience of the glorified Saviour.

2. To a Christian church, individually and collectively, the subject is highly important. Let each one of us ask himself—Have I been led to perceive *this peculiar glory* of the divine character, so as to be made happy by it? If so, you have found the only true ground of glorying before God, who has said: "Let not the wise

man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord,"—Jer. ix. 23, 24.

To conclude. May you, my beloved brethren, the members of this Christian church, take this subject home to yourselves—consider well what have been the Lord's merciful dealings with you as a church—and look up to him for wisdom to enable you to make a proper improvement of them. You have much to be thankful for, and your debt of gratitude is continually increasing. I need not tell you what returns he expects in the way of love and obedience. Seek the prosperity of Zion; pray for the peace of Jerusalem—they shall prosper that love her. Study to be of one mind and judgment in all the affairs of Christ's kingdom, and to speak the same things; let there be no divisions among you, but pray that ye may be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; and may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will—working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XXIV.

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### THE CHILDREN OF ZION REJOICING IN THEIR KING.

—*Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*

Psalm cxlix. 2.

IN the Old Testament Scriptures, more especially the book of Psalms and the Prophets, we find frequent mention made of *Zion*, or *Mount Zion*, and extraordinary things are said concerning it. The name seems to have been first applied to a hill, or mount, in the city of Jerusalem, on which the royal palace of David was built, the residence of the kings of Judah. Thus it is said: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King: God is known in her palaces for a refuge,"—Psalm xlvi. 2. This was the *literal* mount Zion; and we learn from the writers of the New Testament, that it is to be considered as a type, or figure, of the church of Christ under the new dispensation. For proof of this, we only need to hear the apostle Paul, in Heb. xii. 22,—“Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” Indeed it is only when thus considered, that we can properly understand the extraordinary

things which are said concerning it, in the writings of the prophets. Allow me to quote a few texts. Isaiah ii. 3,—“Out of Zion shall go forth the law”—viz. the life-giving law, or glad tidings of salvation, “and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Zion is spoken of as God’s habitation, where he dwells for ever,—Psalm ix. 11, and lxxvi. 2; and Joel iii. 21; the seat of the throne and kingdom of the Messiah, as in Psalm ii. 6; Isaiah xxiv. 23; Micah iv. 7. Divine promises innumerable are made to Zion; such as, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness,”—Isaiah i. 27. “The Lord shall save Zion, and build the cities of Judah,—Psalm lxix. 35. Salvation and all the blessings of grace were to emanate from Zion; and hence the prayer of the faithful, under the former dispensation, who were looking forward with anxious expectation for the coming of the Messiah: “O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion,”—Psalm xix. 7. “The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion,”—Psalm cxxviii. 5; with numerous other texts which it would be endless to quote.

Now, it is very manifest, that the things referred to, in the texts now quoted, were never accomplished in the *literal* mount Zion; and I apprehend the matter can only be explained, by admitting that the name is used as a type for the New Testament church, in which alone these grand things were realized. And such is the import of the term Zion as employed in my text: “*Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*”

In order to illustrate these words a little, I propose to inquire—*Who is the King of Zion*; and attempt a concise delineation of his Character. I shall then speak a little of *the Nature of his Kingdom*;—and describe his *Subjects*, who are here called, “*the children of Zion*,”—and then, after assigning some reasons why they should “be JOYFUL in their King,”—I shall, lastly, apply the subject.



I. Our first enquiry then is, who is the King of Zion, or Lord of the New Testament church, and what is his character? And I reply, *negatively*, that it is not the pope or bishop of Rome; neither is he the king of Great Britain for the time being. It is very true, that the bishops of Rome, and the monarchs of England, have both claimed to be head of the church; and, consistently enough with that arrogant assumption, have proceeded to regulate the faith and worship of men, and to enact sanguinary laws to persecute and punish those who refused to submit their consciences to such dictation. Christians are not to be surprised at this; in fact, to be so would argue great ignorance of their own Scriptures, which predicted, long before the thing happened, that an adverse power would arise, in opposition to the King of Zion; that this monstrous power should “oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;” and that, arrogantly assuming divine honours, he should take his seat in the temple, or church of God, affecting to shew himself to be divine—that is, claiming to be the head of the church,—2 Thess. ii. 4. This prophecy has been fulfilled to the very letter, in the bishops of Rome; and I am sorry to say, that the monarchs of our own country, for the last three hundred years, have become partakers with them in the atrocious wickedness. But the use we ought to make of the affecting truth, as respects both parties, is, to draw from it fresh confirmation of our faith in divine revelation, in which the whole was clearly foretold.

But if neither the bishops of Rome, nor the kings of particular countries, are entitled to be considered in the capacity of kings of Zion, or heads of the church, *who* is he, and *where* are we to look for him? We answer, in Jesus of Nazareth, who was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the Great, more than eighteen hundred years ago—the same whom the Jews took, and by wicked hands crucified upon Mount

Calvary, when Pontius Pilate was governor of that province. His history is given us by the four evangelists, who narrate the interesting circumstances of his birth, family, and lineage—manner of life—baptism—public ministry—doctrine—miracles—sufferings and death—his resurrection on the third day—and his ascension into heaven, in the presence of an assembled multitude.

In this glorious person we find the true Messiah, who was promised unto the fathers by the prophets—the seed of the woman, who was to bruise the serpent's head—the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed—the son of David, and yet his Lord;—the true Melchisedec, the King of righteousness and peace—the virgin's promised Son, and yet Immanuel, God with us—a child born and a son given,—and yet the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the ages, and the Prince of Peace.

This is the person whom *alone*, and to the exclusion of all others, we recognize and acknowledge as the King of Zion, and Head of the Church. Let us take a short review of the grounds on which his claims are founded: and—

1. With regard to his Character as laid down in scripture;—though he appeared in this world in the humble guise of a man—a servant of rulers—destitute of all worldly pomp and splendour—a root out of dry ground—without form or comeliness—yea, a man of sorrows, and one whose companion was grief;—yet we believe him to have been the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth were from eternity—the Almighty Maker of the universe—the WORD which in the beginning was with God, and was God, without whom was not any one thing made that was made, in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. We believe him to be the Son of the Highest, uniting, in his one individual person, the two essentially different natures of God and man;

and so he was God manifest in the flesh—the perfect image of the invisible God. Again,—

2. We believe that he purchased the church with his own blood; for this is expressly declared of him, in Acts xx. 28. And this accounts to us for the state of humiliation, self-abasement, and suffering, to which he submitted, and voluntarily exposed himself, while tabernacling in this lower world. It agrees with all that he himself taught concerning the object of his mission. “I came down from heaven,” said he, “not to do mine own will, but the Father’s who sent me.” “The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.” He came, as the good Shepherd, to give his life for the sheep. His blood was shed for the remission of the sins of many; and it was all-sufficient and available for that purpose—it was the blood of God’s own Son, an eternally divine person, and consequently efficacious to that great end. By his obedience unto death, the holy law of God was magnified and made honourable—his blood atoned for sin—redeemed millions of the human race from a state of condemnation and death—overturned the empire of Satan—despoiled death of his prey—and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

3. We recognize his claim to be the King of Zion in virtue of his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into the highest heavens, where we are assured, that he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he took his seat as “King upon his holy hill of Zion,” according to Psalm ii. 6; and also to Psalm cx:—“The Lord, Jehovah, said unto his Son, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” It was then that all the angels of God received a commandment to worship him. He is the appointed heir of all things; “being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they; for unto which of the angels said God at any time,

Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him,"—Heb. i. 4—6. Thus also the apostle in Old Testament language, testifies in Heb. ii. 7,—“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels,”—viz. for the suffering of death—“thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” So also in chap. i. 8,—“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

It was in consequence and as the reward of his voluntary humiliation and obedience unto death, that God thus highly exalted him, and vested him with supreme dominion over all things in heaven and earth, and under the earth; and also bestowed upon him the highest joy and blessedness, agreeably to the language of prophecy, in Psalm xxi. 3—6,—“Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness—thou settest a crown of pure gold upon his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou set upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.” This is that “joy which was set before him, and for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame,”—Heb. xii. 2.

II. We come now to consider a little *the Nature of his Kingdom*. And the surest method that we can take of ascertaining this point is, to attend to the account which he himself has given of it. Thus when he was interrogated by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, re-

specting his claims to royalty, he answered, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but *now* is my kingdom not from hence." And when Pilate rejoined, "Art thou, then, a king?" Jesus admitted that he was. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth: every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice,"—John xviii. 36, 37. Now a kingdom which is *not* of *this world*, must necessarily be distinguished from such as *are* of it, by certain constituent principles, features, and characteristic qualities; and the question, consequently, is, in what do these consist?

In answer to this inquiry, it may be observed, that the kingdom of Christ is not of a worldly *origin*—for it was set up by the God of heaven, agreeably to ancient prophecy,—Dan. ii. 44. John the Baptist announced it to be at hand in his day,—Matt. iii. 2; and denominated it "the kingdom of heaven;" thereby intimating that it would be of heavenly origin. Jesus further assured Pilate, that it was not such a kingdom as could in any way interfere with Cæsar, or at all answer the carnal expectations of the Jews. It was not capable of being promoted or defended by worldly power or influence; there would be no occasion for the power of the sword, nor had it any dependance on the usual means by which the kingdoms of this world are upheld. It was set up by means of the preaching of the apostles, who bore witness unto the truth, by preaching the Gospel "with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven,"—Acts. ii. Its *Nature* is spiritual and heavenly; for it consists in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Its *privileges* and immunities are not of this world, but spiritual and heavenly—they are spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ—such as, a state of justification—peace with God—adoption into his family—the gift of the Holy Spirit,—and the hope of eternal life in the world to come. The *laws* of this

kingdom are all of heavenly origin, and of supreme authority. They all emanate from Christ Jesus, who alone is King, Lawgiver, and Judge, and are all contained in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, who have recorded what he himself either declared before he left the world, or what they were inspired further to communicate of his mind and will, in setting up his kingdom among men. The design of this extraordinary interposition of Heaven, was not to restore the Jewish Theocracy to its former splendor, or to bestow the honours and riches of this world on the followers of Christ, but "to deliver them from this present evil world," and save them from perishing in the destruction that awaits it. The *doctrine* on which this kingdom is founded, inculcates a system of disconformity to the world, in all its prevailing lusts, and pursuits, and maxims,—and calls the subjects of it to take up the cross, and follow their Lord in the path of self-denial, and patient suffering for his sake—to have their hearts and affections set on things above, and not on the perishing vanities of earth, and this, in the joyful expectation, that when their earthly race is run, they shall reign with Christ in his eternal kingdom.

III. Let us now turn our attention to his Subjects, or, as they are called in my text, "*the Children of Zion*," who are commanded to be joyful in their King. Who are these, and where shall we find them? I answer *not* among unbelieving Jews! *Their* language was, and is,—"We will not have this man to reign over us." Their unanimous cry was, on *the great day of the TRUE atonement*,—"Crucify him, crucify him; not this man, but Barabbus." And unhappily the general language of their race from that day to this, has been the same. *They*, consequently, are not the children of Zion; neither are the worshippers of the beast and the false prophet. But here I must explain. By the false prophet, I mean the Arabian impostor, Mahomet, whose deluded followers,

at this day, comprise two thirds, if not three fourths, of the present inhabitants of the world. And this is a melancholy consideration which ought deeply to affect every feeling heart, and inspire every true child of Zion with zeal for sending the Gospel abroad among the nations, to make known the way of life. By the worshippers of the *beast*, I mean the votaries of Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, who while they profess to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ of God, yet have grossly corrupted his religion, by mingling their own inventions with it—usurping his authority—changing his laws and institutions—and setting up another visible head of the church in his stead. These though a numerous class, and calling themselves Christians, are not “the children of Zion,” but traitors to its King, owning allegiance to his great rival, Antichrist; and they are distinguished, among other things, by their persecuting, even unto strange cities, the real subjects of Jesus. And would to God that I could here pause, without doing injustice to my subject; but the case will not admit of it. For when I look into the writings of the evangelists and apostles, those only true ambassadors of the King of Zion, and mark the extent to which they insist on the allegiance due to our ascended Sovereign, it would be but trifling with the subject to leave it in this imperfect state. From what they teach concerning the nature of his kingdom, his prerogatives, and his claims, I am compelled to consider all national establishments of Christianity, including those of England and Scotland, as wholly Antichristian; though, doubtless, disciples of Christ are to be found in both of them. But so long as they amalgamate the church and the world,—depart from the primitive church-order, discipline, and worship—teach for doctrines the commandments of men—and make light of any thing instituted by the Saviour, or by the holy apostles in his name, in what other light can we be authorized to regard these great bodies, than that of the unchaste

daughters of the "mother of harlots?" And to the disciples of Christ dwelling in them, is the call gone forth: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities,"—Rev. xviii. 4, 5.

I am well aware, that this will be deemed quite *uncharitable* with many in our day. "What!"—they will say—"attempt to unchristianize our excellent, our reformed, our immaculate church! This is the quintessence of bigotry!" Be it so; it is the bigotry of a "*voice from heaven*," resting on the word of the holy apostles, and not of the preacher, who is perfectly content to take his lot with them, and will ever deem it an honour to be associated with them, in all the odium that stands connected with a faithful adherence to their testimony concerning the "good confession," which their Lord and Master witnessed concerning his kingdom,—John xviii. 36.

In the "good confession" which Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate concerning his kingdom, he described his true subjects to be those who are *of the truth*. In other words—they are such as are born again of the incorruptible seed of the word; "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"—John i. 13. Through divine teaching, they have been given to understand and believe the Gospel which the apostles preached, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God"—that he was anointed of the Father to the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King of his church;—that he died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures;—that God is well pleased in him for his righteousness' sake;—and that there is redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of the divine grace. This is the doctrine of the kingdom, as first preached by the Lord himself, and afterwards by his holy apostles, "God bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of



the Holy Spirit." This doctrine is most surely believed by all the children of Zion, and they find in it all their salvation and all their desire. It reigns in all their hearts, and the belief of it works by love; they all love the truth, and those that are of it, for the truth's sake; it is the centre of their joy and charity; and they hate every thing that is opposed to it. Moreover, this doctrine of which I have been speaking, and which, by way of eminence, is termed, "THE TRUTH," is a mould into which the children of Zion are cast, and they receive its impress upon their hearts: it sanctifies them, and leads them into an imitation of the character of their Lord, Redeemer, and King. Hence it is said, "They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world,"—John xvii. 16. They are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,"—Gal. iii. 27. The apostle Peter speaking of them says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,"—1 Pet. ii. 9. Though once darkness, yet now are they light in the Lord; they are all the children of the light and the day, not of the night nor of darkness." The great end of their calling is, that they should show forth the virtues of the divine character, by glorifying God with their bodies and spirits which are his. This is the character of the children of Zion—the true and faithful subjects of Christ's kingdom; and in this way they manifest themselves to be the people whom God hath formed for himself, to show forth his praise,"—Isaiah xliii. 21.

IV. It now remains that we consider the command, or injunction, in the text:—"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

The injunction supposes that there are rational and solid grounds laid for their rejoicing in Him, and that all the children of Zion ought to be acquainted with those grounds. The apostolic epistles abound with

similar exhortations:—as when it is said, “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice,”—Phil. iv. 4. “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,”—chap. iii. 1. “Rejoice evermore,”—1 Thess. v. 16. These may suffice as a specimen of the language of the New Testament on the subject; but I will beg to call your attention to a remarkable text in Zech. ix. 9. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” This is the language of prophecy certainly; but if you turn to Matt. xxi. 1—11, you will find its accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth. And while the subject is before us, allow me to offer a few observations upon it, for the sake of pointing out some of the grounds of rejoicing, which the children of Zion have in the character of their King.

All the four evangelists take notice of this event—Christ’s riding in triumph into Jerusalem. It took place five days before his death. He had lodged the preceding night at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, at the house of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, and during the time of supper, Mary had anointed his feet,—John xii. 2. On the following morning, accompanied by his disciples, he set out for Jerusalem, which introduces the evangelist’s narrative.

Now, it is important for us to observe, how perfectly and peculiarly characteristic all this was, of *a kingdom which is not of this world*—and how appropriate to the character of its sovereign! The Prince of Peace is about to make a triumphal entry into his own city; but here no herald at arms is provided to announce his approach, as would have been the case with an earthly potentate—no trumpet is sounded before him to summon attention—there are no chariots of state, no splendid liveries. These trappings of royalty would not have

been wanting, had the head of the Catholic church, or one of our archbishops been the hero of the drama;—but here you see that everything is in unison with the humble and self-denying character of the King of Zion, and the nature of his kingdom. To stain the pride of all human glory, he sends two of his disciples into a neighbouring village to borrow an ass, on which he condescends to make his triumphant entry into the holy city, the people strewing their garments in the way, and rending the air with their cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.”

And this is the very same individual whom we own as King of Zion, and in whom we are called, in my text, to be joyful—to exult and make our boast—to rejoice always. Let us pause for a moment, and ask—what is there about him that should induce a compliance with the words of my text. And the first thing that strikes us, in reflecting upon his character, is, the union of human weakness with that divine power, which blazes in it.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and became enthroned in glory, it is natural for his disciples on earth to associate in their recollections of him, the ideas of grandeur, magnificence, and splendour, correspondent to his exalted state—and it is very proper that they should do so. But there is a danger, arising from the littleness of our minds, of our forgetting or losing sight of the fact, that the very same Jesus, whom we now acknowledge as our Lord and King, whom we worship as our God and Saviour, and to whom we address our songs of praise, is the very same individual, who was born in a stable at Bethlehem, was subject to his reputed parents, wrought as a carpenter, until he entered on his public ministry, at the age of thirty; the same who, during the three years that he went about doing good, preaching the Gospel of peace, and curing all kinds of diseases, was

so poor, that, "though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air their nests, yet he had not where to lay his head,"—the very same person who fell a martyr to Jewish rage, being taken as a malefactor, and, by wicked hands, crucified and slain. It is this very same Jesus, even he whom Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and the Jewish Sanhedrim, unjustly condemned to death, that we are exhorted to glory in as our King. It was surely not without cause that we find him saying to his disciples, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." We are so accustomed to associate the ideas of virtue and the favour of heaven, with worldly prosperity; and of adversity and the frown of God, with affliction and suffering, that it requires the wisdom which is from above, to correct this erroneous judgment, and lead us to different conclusions—to lead us to understand, how "that which is highly esteemed among men may be an abomination in the sight of God;"—while, on the contrary, the character of Jesus, which was destitute of all those shining qualities which draw the admiration of giddy mortals, and was therefore set at nought by the Jewish scribe and the Greek philosopher, was nevertheless the centre of Jehovah's delight. Happy will it be for us, if we are led to view that character in the light in which God views it—and to rejoice that it is the character of our King.

But, further, another important ground why the children of Zion should be joyful in their King, is,—that He who was crucified in weakness, now lives after the power of an endless life; that all authority and power are committed into his hands, both in heaven and on earth; that he is head over all things to the church,—the highest order of created beings, angels being made subject unto him, and all the affairs of the universe being put under his direction and control. This must ever be a delightful consideration to all his real subjects, the true children of Zion. It was said in ancient prophecy: "Of the increase of

his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this,"—Isaiah ix. 7.

When we take a review of what has been the actual state of Christ's kingdom on earth, since he ascended up on high and took possession of his throne, we are apt to be greatly perplexed and beset with difficulties. In surveying the annals of the church, we find that, for the first three hundred years, the children of Zion were almost incessantly harassed with persecutions from the magistrates of the Pagan Roman government. We then find that a memorable change took place in the *outward* profession of Christianity. Persecution from the Pagan power ceased; emperors, and kings, and princes, enlisted in its cause. But what was the result of this? Why, a most awful apostacy from the faith took place; a form of godliness was drawn over whole nations, and millions assumed the Christian *name*, who knew nothing of the power of godliness. At length, by a gradual process of declension from bad to worse, Antichrist was brought forth—the man of sin was revealed, that wicked one, the son of perdition, the most formidable enemy to Christ and his kingdom that ever appeared in this world. Contemplate this monstrous power, sitting in the temple or church of God, and arrogating the honours of deity—prescribing to men what they should believe and practise—changing times and laws—tyrannizing over the consciences of men—committing fornication with the kings of the earth,—and at length becoming drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus. All this is confounding to our shallow capacities, and we are apt to be stumbled in our reasonings, to account for the permission of such a system of corruption, idolatry, superstition, and iniquity, as the church of Rome has grafted on the simple and heavenly religion of the Son of God.

But let us not be hasty in impeaching the wisdom and benevolence of the King of Zion; he had reasons for permitting the existence of this mass of abominations which we cannot fathom. And, then, let us never overlook the fact, that the rise and reign of this Antichristian power was clearly predicted, in the book of Daniel, five hundred years before the birth of Christ—the prophecy was renewed in the writings of Paul and John—the term of the duration of that reign, was fixed, viz. one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and a promise was given to the church, that the King of Zion would waste and consume his power, by the breath of his mouth, and utterly destroy it, by the brightness of his coming. Yea, so complete shall be its overthrow and destruction, that it will resemble that of a stone cast into the mighty ocean never to be found again. To effect this is perfectly easy to the King of Zion, for “all power is given unto him both in heaven and on earth.” He has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them as the rivers of water. Universal nature is under his control, direction, and management; angels and archangels fly at his command, and are ever obsequious to his will, whether it be in the way of judgment or mercy. The kings of the earth, whom Babylon made drunk with the wine of her fornication, and who in the hour of intoxication had given their power and strength to the beast, have, for some time past, been withdrawing their support, and several of them are now “hating the whore, and making her naked and desolate.” In the figurative language of the Apocalypse, “they are eating her flesh,”—for what short of this is the abolition of tithes and church rates,—“they are burning her with fire,” consuming her very vitals.

My brethren, let us not close our eyes, or be regardless of “the signs of the times.” France is the power that more especially took the lead in seating Antichrist upon his throne. But turn your attention for a mo-

ment to that country, and contemplate the progress of events during the last half century, I mean as relates to the support of mystical Babylon. You cannot have forgotten how the victorious armies of France,—deriding the Pope's bulls, and treating with contempt the fulminations of the Vatican,—over-ran the states of the church,—despoiled this nest of riches of its hidden treasures—laid the country under contribution—and, in the sequel, dragged the head of the Catholic church at their chariot wheels, and kept him for years an exile and a prisoner in a foreign land. Was not this stripping the harlot of her meretricious ornaments and gay attire, exposing her nakedness and shame, and holding her up to the eyes of all Europe, as an object of reproach and derision. Well might they then say, "Is this the power, which formerly made the earth to tremble, and awed the mightiest potentates upon their thrones? Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols has ceased."—"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst weaken the nations!" And, at this moment, how stand matters between the monarchs of France and the court of Rome? Thanks to the King of Zion, that unholy league which, during a thousand years, appeared to be indissoluble, has vanished into thin air—the connexion between church and state no longer exists in that country—the kingdom of the clergy has there sunk into utter and irretrievable ruin!

And is there nothing going forward in our own favoured land to gladden our hearts, and cause the children of Zion to be joyful in their King? I am aware that this is a topic which requires to be handled with some delicacy; yet, what has transpired under our own observation, we may surely be permitted to mention, without giving to any one a just cause of offence. Survey the present state of the established church, appa-

rently tottering upon its foundations—see the legislature overwhelmed with petitions for putting an end to the unholy alliance between church and state—above all, look at the episcopal bench, which may be termed the Corinthian capital of the hierarchy; only a few years ago, we remember it, to all human appearance, reposing in the lap of carnal security, and feeling strong in a confidence based upon public opinion. But, what is its actual condition at the present day? When we witness these “lords spiritual” (!) assembled in the “high places” of the nation, venting their rancorous spleen against all who have thrown off their yoke and emancipated themselves from their thralldom, execrating the humble disciples of the Prince of Peace, as “the curse of the country,”—language which some of their fraternity have not scrupled to use;—can we help calling to mind what is written in the Apocalypse, chap. xvi. 10, 11: “And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.” And who shall help them in this, the hour of their extremity, or even sympathise with them in their loudest expressions of mortification and chagrin? Christians dare not—the inhabitants of heaven do not;—on the contrary, we find it thus written: “After these things, I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia; and her smoke rose up for ever and ever,”—Rev. xix. 1—3. But I must not further enlarge on the subject at this time; let it suffice to have drawn your attention to it, as a reason why the Children of Zion should be joyful in their King—



and as a motive to confidence in his wisdom, power, and grace.

*To conclude:* You, who profess to be the subjects of the King of Zion,—suffer the word of exhortation. Let your consciences be in subjection to the authority of his holy word in all things; and beware of being regulated in any of the concerns of religion by the customs of the country, or the traditions of your forefathers. There is a great deal of vain religion in this land of Bibles and Testaments; it descends from father to son, without examination; and thus it cannot be expected to bear the test of the word of God. See, therefore, that you have “thus saith the Lord,” for whatever you do, and let all your obedience be free and unconstrained. Let every duty be done heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Give him your entire affections, and devote yourselves to his service; make his will your law, and be faithful in your allegiance to your glorious Sovereign; vindicate his authority whenever questioned, and show your own regard for it, not in words only, but in deeds;—in fine, let it appear that you are *Children of Zion*, not only by speaking the language of the city, but by observing its customs, and obeying its laws;—and that you are *true subjects of its King*, by shewing him that honour, which consists rather in the silent adoration of the heart, and the implicit submission of the life, than in the noisy shouts of unfelt praise, or in empty professions of fidelity and love. Let your characters be thus known, and then, but not till then, may you be properly classed with “the Children of Zion,” whom the Psalmist exhorts to “be joyful in their King;” nor can you, till then, ever enter into such joy as is peculiarly theirs, and with which “a stranger doth not intermeddle.

## SERMON XXV.

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### THE CHRISTIAN'S ESTIMATE OF HIS SAVIOUR.

*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.*

Phil. iii. 7, 8.

THE power of the Gospel to subdue the natural enmity of the human heart, overcome its strongest prejudices, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, was signally displayed in the case of the apostle Paul. You all know his history. He was by nation a Jew, and educated in the Jewish religion, of the sect of the Pharisees, and exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers. When Stephen was put to death, he took an active part in forwarding his martyrdom, by holding the clothes of those who stoned him. After this, we find him going to Damascus, armed with authority to commit to prison and to punish as many of the disciples of the Saviour, as he could meet with in that city—when, lo, he is arrested in his mad career, and instantly disarmed of all his hostility. The Lord Jesus appeared to him personally, making himself known as that very person, against whom Saul's rage was directed, and the effects produced upon him by a discovery of the real charac-

ter of Christ, may be not unfitly compared to the case of some mighty river, which, by means of an earthquake, or some convulsion in nature, has its course reversed from east to west! He became a preacher of the faith which he had lately laboured to destroy, and one of "the chiefest of the apostles." This stupendous change—the revolution that took place in the sentiments and conduct, the opinions and actions of such a man,—the principles by which that change was accompanied,—the laborious exertions which they called forth,—and the sacrifices to which they led, are every way worthy of our attention. These are the subjects that occupy the pen of the apostle in the chapter before us; and the text will lead us: I.—To enquire *what* is included in the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord; II.—Wherein its *excellency* consists; III.—To contemplate the *sacrifices* which the apostle made for its sake; and, IV.—To justify the *wisdom* of his conduct.

I. The knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord, must necessarily include in it, or import, the knowledge of *his true character*, as conveyed to us in the Holy Scriptures; and, forasmuch as a considerable diversity of opinion exists among professed Christians on this most important subject, it will be necessary for us to keep close to the Scriptures, and see that our views are regulated by that infallible standard, and not by human systems of religion. Some in our day contend, that Christ Jesus the Lord, was nothing more than a mere mortal man like themselves, and term it blasphemy to attribute any higher honours to him. The apostle Paul once thought so too; and while that was his opinion, he very conscientiously opposed him, considering him to be a blasphemer, in claiming the prerogatives of Deity, by taking to himself the title of the Son of the Highest. But that was in the days of the apostle's ignorance, while the veil was upon his heart, and he understood not the meaning of either

the Law or the Prophets, both of whom had exhibited the Messiah, or promised seed, as a divine person,—Gen. iii. 15; Psalm ii; Isaiah ix. 6, 7; chap. xlv. 22—25. But when he saw HIM, whom the Jews had taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain, alive again from the dead, he no longer doubted, but worshipped him as “over all, God blessed for ever,”—Rom. ix. 5. But we shall collect from this apostle’s writings, a few of the testimonies, which he has left upon record, to the views which he afterwards entertained of the personal glory—the official characters—and the saving grace of Him, whom he once held in a low estimation as any in our day can possibly do.

Thus, addressing the Colossians, he terms him **THE SON OF GOD**, and speaks of Him and his kingdom in the following language—“the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: by whom all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,”—in other words, all the heavenly host, cherubim and seraphim, and angels of every degree, are the works of his hand—“for all things were created by him and for him,”—Col. i. 15, 16; *by* him as their efficient cause, and *for* him as their ultimate end: for his “pleasure they exist and were created,”—Rev. iv. 11. The apostle’s language is much the same when writing to the Hebrews: “God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his **SON**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power,”—chap. i. 2, 3. So far excelling angels, both by dignity of nature, and official appointment, that they are commanded to worship him,—ver. 6; and they are all his ministering servants,—ver. 14. And as respects his creating power, we find the apostle introducing the divine Father, addressing the Son in these sublime terms:

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,”—and “thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they shall perish, but thou remainest; thou art the same and thy years shall not fail,”—ver. 8—12. No language can more fully and explicitly set forth the essential and unoriginated Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ than this.

But the Sonship of Christ implies not only his true, and proper, and essential Deity; it also involves in it his humanity, or his assumption of human nature into personal union with the divine. Hence the apostle terms him “God manifest in the flesh,”—1 Tim. iii. 16; declaring that though he was originally “in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” viz. the divine Father, “yet that he made himself of no reputation,” or emptied himself of the majesty of the Godhead, “and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,”—Phil. ii. 6—8. This also is included in that knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, concerning which the apostle speaks in my text.

Another thing implied in this knowledge is, the end or *design of his mission* into the world; for surely it could be for no trifling purpose that He, who created, upholds, and governs, the universe, should take upon him our nature, become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and then, during a short and sorrowful life, tabernacle among the creatures whom his hand had formed, and become obedient even to the death of the cross. Accordingly, the apostle assures us, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,”—1 Tim. i. 15.

And this leads us to think of the offices which he sustained as the Saviour of a lost world. These are pointed at in the titles given him in my text—“Christ Jesus the Lord.” He was *anointed* of God to the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King of his church

under each of which, he had not only been foretold in ancient prophecy, but had also been prefigured by the prophets, priests, and kings, under the former dispensation.

"I will raise them up a *Prophet* from among their brethren," said Jehovah by the mouth of his servant Moses, "like unto thee,"—Deut. xviii. 18; and the apostle Peter shows us the accomplishment of this prediction, in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth,"—Acts iii. 22. In the discharge of his prophetic office, he revealed his Father's name or character, unfolded his eternal purposes of grace and salvation to a ruined world, and gave us the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. He came a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. He was the day-spring from on high that visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace,"—Luke i. 77—79. But,—

He also fulfilled the office of *High Priest* of his church, and this he did by offering up himself, as a sacrifice for the sins of his guilty people; for the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all; so that he was at once the victim, the altar, and the priest—the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—Christ our passover sacrificed for us. In him all the various parts of the Levitical priesthood found their accomplishment. The temple itself was a type of his body or human nature; and the various sacrifices and offerings, which were offered according to the law, were designed to shadow forth that one grand sacrifice which was at length made, when HE, through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, giving his life a ransom for many, shedding his blood for the remission of the sins of many—thus making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness, for the justification of all who believe.

*His Kingly Office* may be said to be founded upon

his vicarious sufferings; for having been made a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death, he was, as the reward of those sufferings, not only raised from the dead, but also crowned with glory and honour, seated as King on God's holy hill of Zion, all power in heaven and earth being given unto him. For, as the apostle states in Phil. ii. 9—11,—“God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Having thus briefly glanced at some of the leading points contained in the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, we now proceed to inquire into its properties, and for that purpose, to shew,—

II. Wherein its *Excellency* consists. And on this head I may remark, *in general*, that what renders it peculiarly excellent, or *valuable*, to such creatures as we are, is, that it unfolds the way of escape from the wrath to come—it conveys “the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.” “For this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.”

In the knowledge of Christ, we are taught how God can be just in justifying the ungodly, and in pardoning the transgressions of his guilty creatures, receiving them into his favour, and conferring upon them all the blessings of his grace here, and eternal life hereafter, and that in a way consistent with the honours of his government, the demands of his justice, and the holiness and purity of his nature. But this is a part of our subject which must not be passed over lightly; for it is replete with considerations, at once so instructive to the ignorant, and so conducive to the edification of the well-informed believer, that it will abundantly recompense us for our time in dwelling a little upon it.

1. The knowledge of Christ is superlatively excellent, as it presents us with the highest and brightest manifestation of *the glory of God*, connected with the salvation of sinners. The glory of God shines most effulgently in the face, or person, of Jesus Christ. *In his person*, as THE SON, he is "the image of the invisible God." In his character and work, in his doctrine and miracles, in all that he did and taught,—the attributes and perfections of Jehovah were displayed. In the mission of Christ into our sinful world, we have an amazing manifestation of the love of God towards our guilty race—his philanthropy, or good will towards fallen man, is there most gloriously displayed. But it is from the cross—the great transactions of Mount Calvary,—that the brightest beams of the divine glory emanate; and it was this that led our apostle to exclaim, as he does upon another occasion: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When he turned his attention to Calvary, what did he contemplate? Why, under all the disguises of poverty, disgrace, and distress, he beheld the true God, the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, expiring as a malefactor, in order to expiate the sins of such wretches as himself. The Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, in human flesh, covered with ignominy and maltreated by mortals—the Judge of all, arraigned at a human tribunal—the Fountain of all riches and fulness, now become poor indeed—the Lord of Life subjected to death—the Holy One and the Just suffering as a malefactor! When the eyes of the apostle were opened to contemplate this wondrous scene in its true light, it overwhelmed him with astonishment at the amazing contrast which presented itself to his view; for then the infinite greatness, of divine love and condescension blazed forth in all its glory. In the cross of Christ, he saw all the divine perfections most gloriously magnified and displayed. The wisdom, power, and goodness, of the blessed God shone forth to higher advantage, than in



all the works of Creation and Providence. Wisdom in contriving the wondrous plan of man's redemption, so as to reconcile the joint exercise of justice and mercy—to show God's infinite opposition to sin, and at the same time his love to the sinner—to punish guilt to the utmost, and yet pardon the guilty fully and freely—to declare and even magnify his justice in the remission of sins, and enhance his mercy to the utmost in the way of punishing it: this was a scheme of salvation, which nothing short of infinite wisdom could devise, or infinite power execute; while unbounded goodness shines throughout the whole.

But these were not the only perfections of Deity, which the apostle was led to contemplate in the transactions of Calvary: for here also he was struck with the display that was made of the truth, justice, holiness, love, mercy, and grace of the Most High. Here he beheld justice and mercy—righteousness and peace, blended in one consistent and harmonious union. Justice was displayed in vindicating the honours of the law and government of God, and punishing sin to the utmost in the person of a substitute, and that substitute his own and well-beloved Son, in order that mercy might be extended to guilty rebels. But the most conspicuous figure in the whole scene is the sovereign grace and love of God, towards a lost and perishing world; grace reigning through righteousness in bestowing eternal life on rebellious mortals that deserved to perish. These, I say, were some of the wonderful and interesting events that rendered the knowledge of Christ so transcendently excellent in the apostle's estimation, and induced him to make such sacrifices for it as he did. But,—

2. The excellency of this knowledge must also include *its practical influence*. It is not like many branches of purely human science, a subject of dry speculation, on which, the understanding and the judgment may be exercised, without touching the will and the affections. The history of the apostle Paul exem-

plifies the truth of what has now been remarked. When the knowledge of Christ first beamed upon him, it produced the most stupendous effects on all the powers of his mind, informing his understanding, and influencing his affections and will. From a furious persecutor, he became a zealous defender of the faith which he once laboured to destroy. His prejudices all vanished, like the mists of the morning before the rising sun—his enmity and hatred were turned into love. A discovery of the amazing love of Christ in submitting to the accursed death of the cross, to open a way for his escape from everlasting misery, fired his soul with love to the Saviour, such as not only raised him above all worldly discouragements, but even above himself—"the love of Christ," said he, "constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again,"—2 Cor. v. 14, 15. To him, "to live was Christ," i. e. he only desired to live, that he might promote the glory of Christ and the salvation of his fellow mortals, being confident that death would be to him unspeakable gain. So far as he had a wish of his own, it was to leave this world of sin and trouble, that he might be with Christ, which was far preferable to the highest spiritual enjoyments which he could have here; so that he had little concern about himself, except that he might finish his course with joy, and testify the Gospel of the grace of God. His life was only dear to him for these ends: the glory of God, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, absorbed in the apostle's mind all other considerations.

III. The text leads us to think of certain sacrifices which the apostle made for the sake of this excellent knowledge. His words are: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"—"for his sake I

have suffered the loss of all things." But perhaps you may ask *what did he lose?* He has himself answered this question in the preceding verses, particularly from ver. 5, to the words of my text.

1. He made a sacrifice of all *his Jewish privileges*. He tells us that he had been "circumcised on the eighth day," conformably to the strict letter of the law of Moses. He was "of the stock of Israel," and not a sinner of the Gentiles. He was "of the tribe of Benjamin," that tribe which remained faithful to Judah when the other ten had revolted. He was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews;" in other words, both his father and mother were of Jewish extraction, and not like Timothy, whose father was a Greek, though his mother was a Jewess,—Acts xvi. 1; and, "as touching the law, he was a Pharisee," the strictest sect of the Jewish religion. And such was his zeal for the religion of his forefathers, that he "persecuted the Christian church" for not conforming to it. Moreover, as respected the national righteousness, or conformity to the ritual observances of the law of Moses, he was *blameless*. I presume it would be no easy task to find an individual with better claims to the favour of God, on the score of human merit and desert, than those which Paul possessed; but the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord led him to count all as loss for his sake.

2. When he was brought to the knowledge of Christ and his salvation, he lost *his religious character*, in which he had formerly gloried greatly. He had enjoyed no ordinary advantages of education; for, having passed through the grammar school of Tarsus, the place of his nativity, he was sent by his parents to perfect his studies at Jerusalem, under Gamaliel, the most renowned doctor of his age in Rabbinical learning. Neither was his proficiency of any ordinary cast; for he "profited in the Jews' religion above many of his fellow students, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers,"—Gal. i. 14. But all these

advantages went for nothing with him in the school of Christ—he was content to sacrifice all of them for Christ's sake. And not only so, but what was still more important,—

3. The apostle lost all confidence in *his own righteousness*, in which he once plumed himself not a little. Considering the Old, that is, the Sinai covenant, as the standard of his national faith, he regarded himself, according to the tenor of that covenant, as *blameless*, or quite perfect in his obedience. At that time, however, he understood not the extent and breadth of the divine law, as illustrated by our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount. He was not aware that its requirements extended to the thoughts of the heart, as well as the actions of the life: and the consequence was, he vainly imagined, that what gave him a preference in the sight of men, must also entitle him to the favour of God. But, as he tells us in another place, “when the commandment came,” that is, when he was made acquainted with the spirituality of the divine law, and saw the commandment to be “exceeding broad,” reaching to the thoughts of the heart,—“sin revived, and I died.” From this time, he gave up all hope of finding acceptance with God on the ground of his own righteousness, and had no confidence in *he flesh*. The first desire of his heart was, that he might be “found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,”—ver. 9. This was an immense sacrifice for a Pharisee to make, and it is in vain to expect it from any, until they are in possession of a better righteousness than their own, which was Paul's happy lot. But,—

4. Another sacrifice which the apostle made for the sake of the excellent knowledge of his Lord and Saviour was, that of *his property* and *worldly interests*. Various considerations lead us to think, that the apostle's prospects in life were, at one time, very flattering.

His birth as a freeman of Rome—his family connexions, and advantages of education—his proficiency in learning,—and his superior zeal,—seem all to have combined in opening to him the high road to fame, reputation, preferment, and honour, which were all lost to him when he became a Christian. “I will show him,” said his divine Master, when he called him by his grace, “how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake,”—Acts xix. 16. And so it turned out. If you wish for a catalogue of the privations, or hardships and suffering which he underwent, you have his own account of them,—1 Cor. iv. 9—13; and 2 Cor. xi. 23—28. So long as liberty was granted him, he wrought night and day with his own hands as a tent maker, that he might provide for his own support and that of those who were with him; and, when in prison, he gratefully accepted the charitable contributions that were sent him by his brethren at Philippi and other places. He does, indeed, upon one occasion, speak of his property; it is in his second epistle to Timothy, written a little before his death; and I will read you the catalogue which he has given us of it. “The *cloak* that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the *books*, but especially the *parchments*,”—2 Tim. iv. 13. This would seem to have been the whole inventory of his goods and chattels—a cloak, probably his Roman toga, the badge of his citizenship—a few books, not more than Timothy was able to bring along with him—and the parchments, which probably contained the autographs of his epistles to the churches. Methinks I hear some one exclaiming, “We have now got to the end of the apostle’s sacrifices.” Having lost his Jewish privileges—his character and reputation—his righteousness—his liberty, property, and worldly interests,—he might with truth say, “for whom I have suffered the loss of *all things*.”—There did, however, yet remain one thing to him, namely,—

5. *His life*. But even that did not long remain with

him; for, when he wrote his second letter to Timothy, he tells him: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." And, indeed, how little he regarded his life, when it came in competition with his allegiance to Christ, we may collect from many hints scattered up and down in his writings. When, for instance, on one occasion, his friends would have dissuaded him from going up to Jerusalem, from an apprehension of the opposition he would have to encounter, what was his answer? "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,"—Acts xxi. 13. Much to the same purport is his language to the Philippians in the preceding chapter, where he says: "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all,"—chap. ii. 17. And this honour, the honour of martyrdom, was conferred upon him, in his Lord's due time, completing the sum total of his sacrifices.

IV. It now only remains for us to enquire, whether there be any principles upon which we can justify the prudence of the apostle's conduct in submitting to these privations, hardships, and sacrifices, for the sake of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

And, here, one thing is very obvious, that the apostle acted most deliberately in what he did—it was not the result of a hasty, ill-judged thought, the impulse of the moment, as some might imagine. His words are: "Yea, *doubtless*, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Now the apostle manifestly proceeded on this principle—that it was his highest wisdom to sacrifice the less for the sake of the greater—to prefer eternal life to the things of the present life—to forego the ease, the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this world—to be denied to all

these things, for the sake of those superior blessings which are connected with the knowledge of Christ, and obedience to his revealed will. This is a lesson which our Lord dwelt much upon in his public ministry. I will quote one passage, and let it serve for all. Thus he addressed the people and his disciples: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me: for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels,"—Mark viii. 34—38.

Here, then, we have laid before us the principle by which the apostle was actuated in all his conduct; and my text affords a striking exemplification of his faith in the doctrine of his Lord and Saviour. In his writings, he continually inculcates upon others, an imitation of his own conduct,—2 Tim. i. 8. "It is a faithful saying," says he, "for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us,"—2 Tim. ii. 10—12. At the moment of writing these words, he was in bonds at Rome, on account of his apostolic office, and for preaching Christ's Gospel; but though he suffered these things, he says, "I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day,"—2 Tim. i. 12. The day to which he refers is, doubtless, the day when Christ shall return to put an end to the present dispensation, to raise the dead, and judge the world; when he will give rest to his afflicted people, and punish their enemies with everlasting destruction from his

presence and the glory of his power. Solemn and awful as that period must be, the apostle looked forward to it with joyful anticipation, and his whole deportment in this world was regulated by a due regard to it—by the hopes and fears which it inspired. His grand concern was, to win Christ and be found in him—clothed in the righteousness which is of God by faith. Much as he knew of Christ, he was anxious to know more of him, and of the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Already his citizenship was in heaven, from whence he looked for the Saviour's return to change the bodies provided for his servants' in their state of humiliation, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body—thus perfecting the salvation of his saints.

To conclude: Let us improve the subject, by bringing it home to ourselves in the way of self-examination. You who profess to know and love the Saviour, and to honour him with the title of Lord, Lord,—ask your own hearts what sacrifices you have made for his sake, and what sacrifices you are now prepared to make, to testify your sense of gratitude for his redeeming love. See what it led the apostle to endure and to lose; ponder well his history; and go you and do likewise.

Now, for the love I bear his name,  
 What was my gain I count my loss;  
 My former pride, I call my shame;  
 And nail my glory to his cross.

Yes, and I must, and will esteem  
 All things but loss for Jesus' sake;  
 May I at last be found in him,  
 And of his righteousness partake!



## SERMON XXVI.

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### ON SPIRITUALITY OF MIND.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Col. iii. 1—4.

IT is a fact universally admitted, that man is a being of a compound nature; he consists of a soul and a body. By the former, he is allied to God and angels; by the latter, to earth and earthly things. In consequence of this complex constitution of his person, he is capable of two very different kinds of *enjoyments*, subjected to two distinct classes of *desires*, and lives at once in two dissimilar *states*. From the body, arise appetites for worldly things, and he is so formed as to find pleasure in them; from the soul, desires of things spiritual and eternal, and a relish for them. We live an animal or natural life, and we are endued with capacities for living, at the same time, a rational or spiritual life; and thus, by the very constitution of our nature, our attention is drawn different ways, our views are directed to contrary objects, and we are engaged in dissimilar employments.

The things of this world are the objects of sense, and they are constantly soliciting our notice; they force themselves upon our view, and they affect us strongly—so strongly, that with the generality they absorb their whole attention. “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?” is the one grand concern, the universal cry; while spiritual and eternal things, the concerns of the soul, things which can be perceived only by faith, are made of inferior consideration, and totally disregarded by the bulk of mankind. And even Christians themselves, who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds, created anew in Christ Jesus, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are but too apt to lose sight of the superior claims of their immortal part, and to let its interests give place to those of the animal life. Hence the numerous exhortations with which the New Testament in particular abounds, enjoining upon them to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and not to love the world, or the things which are in the world; but to set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. Such is the exhortation contained in the words of our text, which I now propose to consider under the following heads of discourse.

I.—The *state* of the persons who are here addressed;  
 II.—What we are to understand by the *things above*;  
 III.—The import of the *exhortation*; IV.—The *argument*, motives, or inducements, urged by the Apostle, why it is incumbent on believers to comply with it.

I. With respect to *the state* of the persons to whom the exhortation in the text is given, the apostle supposes them to be *risen with Christ*. Their profession implied this, and it was meet for him to think thus of them all. But that we may understand what is imported in this their new state, it will be proper to remark, that the Scriptures always represent men while

in their natural state, as being wholly governed by the principles of the animal life, and what pertains to it; and this, even in their most refined speculations, and in their most decent conduct. They are in the flesh, and they mind the things of the flesh, which are the things on earth; and above these their hearts and affections never soar, whatever outward appearance they may make, or whatever transient convictions they may have. But the true believer is described as being born from above,—"born again of the incorruptible seed of the word," consequently, as being dead in regard to his former life and its actings, and raised to a new life through faith in Christ Jesus the Lord; so that he has new views, new aims, new instincts, desires, and enjoyments. With such a one, "old things are passed away, and he is become a new creation." This new birth, or resurrection to a new and spiritual life, is represented in the ordinance of baptism, which the apostle had referred to in the preceding chapter, verses 12 and 13, where he speaks of them as "buried with Christ in baptism; wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses."

Their baptism represented the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, whereby he fulfilled all righteousness, as the substitute of his guilty people,\*—their union and communion with Christ therein,†—and also their conformity to him in dying unto sin, and rising again to newness of life, through faith in him who was delivered for their offences, and raised again for their justification.‡ So that, if they were real believers in Christ, they had the thing signified by their baptism. They who were once dead *in* their sins, were now dead

\* Matt. iii. 15.

† Rom. vi. 10, 11; 2 Cor. v. 14; Gal. ii. 19, 20; Eph. ii. 4–7.

‡ Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

to sin, and buried with Christ; they were also quickened together with him, having all their trespasses forgiven; they were also delivered from the dominion of sin, being raised up together with him, to walk in newness of life, which will issue in their resurrection to eternal life with Christ in glory. Such was the happy state to which they were risen with Christ, as represented by their baptism. Let us now consider,—

II. What we are to understand by *the things above*, which the apostle exhorts them to seek.

Now the things that are above, are *heavenly* things—not merely the heavenly inheritance itself, but all those things which pertain to it, and are both designed and calculated to fit and prepare the children of God for the enjoyment of it; and these are all opposed to things on the earth. All the spiritual blessings which the God of salvation confers through Christ, are things above, or *heavenly* things,—Eph. i. 3, both with regard to their *nature* and *source*. All those things which belong to the new or Christian life,—to the believer's growth in grace, and his spiritual enjoyments in this world, are *things above*; they come from above, and are heavenly in their nature and tendency. We shall specify some of these. For instance:—

1. There is “the sincere milk of the word,”\*—the doctrine concerning Christ and his salvation, which is the food of the regenerate soul, with all the other appointed means of instruction and growth in grace; such as the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers and praises of the house of God, which are all of them divinely calculated to nourish the souls of the disciples, to encrease their faith, hope, and love, and cause them to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Though these means are on the earth, even as

\* 1 Pet. ii. 2.

we ourselves are, yet they are from above, and bring the things that are above to our view; so they tend to promote our spirituality of mind, and our desire after heavenly things; and those who have no relish for these "wells of salvation," cannot be supposed to have spiritual life, or to seek the things that are above.

2. The influences of the Holy Spirit, in a way of light, life, holiness, and consolation, with all his blessed fruits and effects upon our souls, are also things above, which the children of God ought earnestly to seek after. It is by the influence of the Spirit, that the outward means produce their proper effects. And although those who are risen with Christ have all of them the Spirit of God in some measure, yet they are called to seek *larger communications* of the Spirit of grace. Hence we find the apostle praying in behalf of the believing Ephesians, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they might know what is the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,\*"—that "he would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God."† For the Romans he prays, "that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing that they might abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit."‡ And in behalf of the Thessalonians, "that the Lord would make them to increase and abound in love one toward

\* Eph. i. 17—21.

† chap. iii. 16—19.

‡ Rom. xv. 13.

another, and toward all men, to the end he might establish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."\* The real disciples of Christ will be very sensible of the need they have of an increase of all the fruits of the Spirit, as they relate to every *gracious temper*, as well as spiritual enjoyment, and will, undoubtedly, seek these things. But,

3. The *things that are above* more especially signify things pertaining to the *heavenly state*; or future glory, for they are said to be "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

When the Son of God rose from the dead, he did not remain on earth, to set up a worldly kingdom, or political establishment here, that he and his followers might pursue after earthly happiness and the enjoyments of sense. Far otherwise: he ascended into heaven as their forerunner, to prepare mansions of eternal rest and blessedness for them; consequently, those who are risen with him should follow his example, by seeking those heavenly enjoyments which are at God's right hand, where Christ now is, and where there is fulness of joy, even pleasures for evermore.† But who can describe the glory and happiness of these things? What eye hath seen, or what ear hath heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him? It is to appear with Christ in glory—to see him as he is, and to be made like him—to partake of that blessedness with which he is crowned—and to be for ever with the Lord beyond the reach of wo. This felicity Christ now enjoys, as the risen and glorified Head of his body, the church; and it is in his gift to bestow the same upon those who are risen with him. This leads us,—

III. To enquire, *what is implied* in the exhortation, to *seek* the things that are above.

\* 1 Thess. iii. 12,

† Psalm xvi 11,

And I begin with remarking, that to seek these blessings, it is absolutely necessary that we be *firmly persuaded* in our own minds, that such things are to be obtained; for unless this be the case, we shall never seek them in earnest. It is said of the Patriarch Abraham, that when called to quit his country and kindred, and to go into the land which was promised him for an inheritance, he obeyed the divine direction; and he went out not knowing whither he went. It was faith in God's promise—the confidence which he had in the divine veracity,—which influenced his conduct; for he was firmly persuaded that there was such a country, and that his expectation of possessing it should not be disappointed. And this is written for the admonition of Christians, who have the promise of a better inheritance; but if they doubt of its existence, or question the faithfulness of Him who hath promised it, they will not seek it with their whole heart; lukewarmness, formality, and a listless indifference, will characterize all their conduct.

Again, when we are exhorted to *seek* the things that are above, it implies that we give these things a decided preference in our judgment and affection above everything in this world. So the apostle exhorts: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Things on the earth are earthly things—of an earthly nature, and adapted to the animal life. On these he forbids us to set our affections, well knowing that, in that case, it would be impossible for us to place our affections on heavenly things, and, consequently, to pursue them as our leading object, they being wholly incompatible with each other. To seek the things above, therefore, we must have our affections detached from the things of this world, and set upon heavenly things. Even a divided heart will, in this case, effectually hinder us from seeking the things that are above.

Once more. The exhortation in the text, to seek the

things that are above, implies, that we keep them habitually and steadily in view as the objects of our *supreme desire and joyful hope*. Not only must we prefer them in our judgment to all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, but our affections must soar to them; we must seek them by earnest prayer, and in a diligent use of all the means that Divine Wisdom hath appointed for the attainment of them; following Jesus in the race of faith and patience, and pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high calling. Like the apostle Paul, we must be crucified unto the world, and have our conversation in heaven. Thus it was that the Patriarchs of old desired and sought a heavenly country, confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth,—Heb. xi. 14—16; chap. xii. 1, 2; Phil. iii. 13, 14. This is, by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, even eternal life,—Rom. ii. 7.

IV. AND LASTLY, let us advert to the *reasons* adduced in the text, to enforce this exhortation. And the first thing of which the apostle reminds the Colossians is, that "*they were dead*,"—namely, by communion with Christ in his death, as signified in their baptism. They were dead *to the world*, as the source of their happiness and joy. Having found all their salvation and all their desire in the doctrine of Christ crucified, they were become crucified unto the world, and the world unto them.\* They were also *dead to the law*, as the condition of life, or terms of acceptance with God; for in this way only could they live *to God*; and hence the apostle says of himself, "I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God: I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,"†—and, finally, they were *dead*

\* Gal. vi. 14.

† Gal. ii. 19, 20.



*to sin*, as they professed in their baptism.\* How, then, can those who are dead to sin, live any longer therein, or set their affections on things on the earth? “Know ye not,” says the apostle to the Romans, “that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”\* Such is the improvement, which believers who have been baptized upon a scriptural profession of faith in Christ, are instructed to make of that solemn ordinance. The apostle adds,—*your life is hid with Christ in God*. The true spiritual and heavenly life of a Christian consists in the enjoyment of the divine favour, and this life will be perfected in the everlasting fruition of God in the heavenly state. But this life is not visible to the world, nor even to themselves at present. True, they have the faith, hope, and earnest of it, by the Spirit; but it is hid with Christ, who is removed from their sight, and now seated at God’s right hand: for we are told, that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ”—who is our life—“shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”† And surely the hope of this should lead us to purify ourselves, by raising our hearts and affections above this transitory state of things, and promoting our spiritual-mindedness, which is life and peace. For, never let us lose sight of this animating consideration, that, *when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory*. Christ

\* Rom. vi. 3 6.

† 1 John iii. 2,

is here called "our life," because he lives in us, as the apostle Paul says on another occasion,\*—and because he is the second man, the quickening Spirit, who will raise up his disciples to the enjoyment of an immortal and glorious life with himself in heaven. He will come again the second time, to perfect the salvation of all who look for him; and then, they shall appear with him in glory. He will at his coming, raise the dead, and judge the world in righteousness, conferring upon his faithful followers the crown and the kingdom. Then they shall see him as he is; they shall be with him, behold his glory, and share in his blessedness.† And is not this a sufficient reason, why we should seek the things that are above, where He is, and set our affections on them, and not on things on the earth?

But we shall now advert to some other considerations which should induce all who name the name of Christ, to comply with this important exhortation. And, here let us be reminded, that,—

1. *Consistency with our profession* requires that we should set our affections upon things above, and make such things the supreme object of our pursuit. Having, in our baptism, professed to be dead to sin and the world, by the death or crucifixion of Christ, and to be risen with him to newness of life, if we have any regard to consistency of character, we must see the obligations we are under, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, loving the world and the things that are in the world, but giving proof that our citizenship is in heaven, by having our hearts and affections centering there. If we are dead to sin and worldly lusts, if we are really risen with Christ to newness of life, and have our life hid with Christ in God, as implied in our profession, we must undoubtedly seek the things that are above. For if our affections and pur-

\* Gal. ii. 20.

† John xvii. 24; 1 John iii. 2.

suits are more set upon the things of this world, than upon heavenly objects, under whatever pretext this may be, our inconsistency must be glaring, and our profession plainly hypocritical. Besides,—

2. We should ever keep in mind, that *our state and character* will be determined by that which engages our chief affections and pursuit, whether it be the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, or the concerns of this lower world. “To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” To know our real character, we have only to ask ourselves seriously, which have the chief hold of our affections,—the joys of sense, the pleasures of sin which are but for a moment, the concerns of this sublunary state, the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world,—or the enjoyment of the divine favour, the institutions of the kingdom of heaven, the joyful hope of everlasting life from the dead in the kingdom of the Father; and then let conscience decide. If, therefore, it be of any importance to us, whether we are real Christians or not, a compliance with the exhortation in the text must be equally so.

3. Let us all remember, that *nothing on earth is worthy of our supreme affection*. All that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—these are all sensual, worldly things. Concerning some of them, it may be truly said, that the love of them is gross and brutish—of others, that it is sordid and base,—and of a third class that it is foolish, vain, and diabolical; while all of them are opposed to the love of God, and wholly incompatible with it. They debase and vitiate the soul. Even the lawful enjoyments of life, when allowed to predominate in our hearts, so as to take the place of things that are spiritual and heavenly, will inevitably be productive of the same pernicious effects. The best things which this world affords, can never yield true happiness to an intelligent, reflecting mind, though they may, for a season, intoxi-

cate it. And though we were to suppose them ten thousand times better than they are, we must at least admit, that they are all vanishing and transitory, even as our own lives are by which we enjoy them. But how different is the case with the "things that are above." These indeed are *worthy* of our highest affections. They are, in their own nature, the most amiable and excellent. The love of them ennobles and purifies the mind. They are satisfying, and every way adequate to the most enlarged desires of the soul, so as to yield complete happiness; and to crown the whole, they are everlasting in their duration.

4. The things on which we are exhorted to fix our affection are above, *where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*. All the happiness of the saints, whether in possession or in hope, flows to them through the Lord Jesus Christ. He has procured it by his death and resurrection; and he is now in possession of it as their Head. Their life is hid with him in God. He is the quickening Spirit that will raise them up to the full fruition of it; for he is their life, and they shall reign in life by him, appearing with him in glory. This everlasting happiness, therefore, is to be enjoyed where Christ is—in his society—in the highest heavens,—where they shall see him as he is, behold his glory, and be made like unto him. In the present world, the highest earthly happiness which the children of God know, consists in the enjoyment and friendship of the objects of their love; and when these are separated from them by death, it is a pleasing thought to anticipate a period, when they shall meet them again in a happier world. But if this be true of our Christian friends in general, what must it be to be admitted into the presence of the Saviour himself, our best and most affectionate friend—He with whom none else can compare, and who deserves our highest affection! If, therefore, we love him as we ought, our affections must necessarily be where he is, and our prevailing desire be, to be with him, which is far better than all our enjoyments on earth, even of a spiritual kind.

## SERMON XXVII.

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### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*This do in remembrance of me.*

Luke xxii. 19.

THE wish to be remembered after we are dead, by those who shared our affections here, is one of the strongest desires that the God of nature has implanted in the human breast. Hence the common practice, when mortals are about to quit the stage of life, of distributing tokens of affection among their surviving friends; and after death, their graves are preserved, and monuments are erected to perpetuate their memories. Something of this kind may be traced in the histories of all countries, which would seem to indicate that the thing was founded in nature. Nor is there any thing sinful in it. The Son of the Highest both felt and indulged it. When about to take his last farewell of his beloved disciples, who had been his companions on earth, we find him anxious, that they should not forget him when absent from their sight; and to prevent this, he instituted a memorial of his dying love. "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me.*"

But it was not merely by his first disciples that the gracious Saviour wished to be remembered; for as the

benefits of his death were to be partaken of by multitudes of the human race, who were to be born in every age to the remotest period of time; so he appointed this ordinance of the breaking of bread, to be a stated institution in his church or kingdom, to embalm his memory in the devoted affections of his people, and to remind them, from time to time, of the debt of gratitude they owe to his dying love. He is still saying to each of us, in his word and in his ordinances, "*Remember me.*"

Our blessed Redeemer had, indeed, a reason for desiring to be kept in the recollections of his disciples, which none other of the human race can pretend to; and that is founded upon the ardent affection he bears them. He well knew how much of their peace, and happiness, and joy, depended upon their remembering HIM. If burdened with a sense of guilt, he well knew that relief could only come to them effectually, by thinking of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." If the world allured them by its pleasures, or frowned upon them with its calamities, he was aware they had only to turn their thoughts to Calvary, to find an antidote to both. In short, whatever was their condition and present circumstances, while traversing this vale of tears, he knew they had only to think of HIM, his character, offices, grace, and salvation; to find a source of rejoicing, and that with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Allow me, my beloved brethren, to put you in mind of a few plain things suggested by the words of the text. And for the sake of perspicuity and order, I shall submit to your consideration, what I have to say, on the present occasion, under the following views—namely, **WHAT** we should more particularly remember concerning the Lord Jesus Christ,—**How** we should remember it,—and **WHY** we ought to remember it.

I. **WHAT** is it we are called to remember concerning Christ, in the ordinance of his Supper? And, first,—

In observing this institution, we ought to recall to our recollection, *Who he is*;—the Word incarnate, or God manifest in the flesh—the beloved Son of God—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person—the Almighty Creator, Upholder, and Governor of the Universe;—the Lord of Angels and of men, “over all and God blessed for ever.” A recollection of his original dignity, is necessary to our forming just conceptions of the depth of his condescension, the efficacy of his atonement, and the greatness of his love.

We are also called, in this ordinance, to remember *what he became* for our sakes. Though he was in the form of God, and though it was no robbery in him to claim equality with God, yet he emptied himself of the majesty of Deity and veiled his glory, the glory of the Godhead, in humble clay; he passed by the nature of angels, and took hold of the seed of Abraham; he was found in fashion as a man, and became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that he might hold converse with worms of the earth; for “the children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.” And was not this astonishing condescension? “The Mighty God” became a “child born” and a “Son given!”—the Father of Eternity, became a feeble babe, whose duration is measured by days, and weeks, and months, and years.

We should further call to mind *what he did*, and *what he said*, while tabernacling among us. “That he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; that he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;”—on the contrary, he always did the things which pleased his heavenly Father. He went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men—healing diseases, and teaching the people the things that concerned their eternal peace. We should think of the “gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth,”—the “glad tidings of great joy” which he proclaimed to perishing sinners, as the great object of his mission into the world, and the chan-

nel through which forgiveness was to flow to the children of men. Nor should we be unmindful of the precious instructions and divine consolations which he administered to his disciples, immediately after he had instituted the Lord's Supper, and which are recorded in the fourteenth and three following chapters of John's gospel.

But especially should we, on this occasion, well and deeply consider *what he suffered*—at the hands of wicked men—from the powers of darkness—and from his God! What he suffered in his body, when he was nailed to the accursed tree; in his holy soul, when the cup of divine indignation against sin was given him to drink, and the vials of the wrath of God were poured out upon the innocent sufferer! Think of the image of the invisible God, crucified as a malefactor, amidst the scoffs and insults of an infuriated rabble! Consider how diversified, how complicated, how intense, how violent, were his sufferings. Reflect on his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and trace him thence to Herod's judgment hall. Consider the crown of thorns—the scourging and buffeting—the bearing of his cross, and the crucifixion—the thirst, the gall, the vinegar:—these are all fit topics for our meditation when surrounding the table of the Lord.

And then let us remember *that he died*—and *how he died*. He “died for our sins, according to the predictions of the Old Testament Scriptures.” His death was that of a traitor and blasphemer, a felon, and a slave—a shameful, painful, ignominious death—an accursed death—accursed of God: he was made a curse for guilty rebels. He poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with transgressors, and reckoned as vile as they. He expired under the wrath of God. And while we meditate on his sufferings, let us never forget, how deeply we are interested in them; that his body was broken, and his blood shed, for our benefit, and in our



stead: that "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and that by his stripes we are healed."

Moreover, we are called, in this institution, to remember *the important consequences of his death*. And what are they? To expiate sin—to satisfy the claims which divine justice had upon us—to atone Almighty wrath—to secure the honours of the divine character in extending mercy to the guilty—to vindicate the rights of the divine government in pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin—to ratify the new and everlasting covenant—and open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. These are some of the grand and benevolent ends of the Saviour's death. It was the most extraordinary occurrence that ever took place on the theatre of this world: it shook hell to its centre, and filled the abodes of bliss with wonder and admiration. To witness the Lord of Life and Glory expiring as a malefactor on a gibbet, and that to save rebellious worms of the earth, excited the sympathy of universal nature,—the sun withdrew his light—the earth was convulsed—the rocks were rent—the graves opened—and many of the dead returned to life again. This is the wonderful event which we are called to commemorate in the breaking of bread, and at the same time to remember, that it was for us men, and for our salvation.

I only add, that in partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are called to remember, that as Christ proceeded from the Father, and came into this world, to effect the salvation of his guilty people; so having accomplished that amazing undertaking, he has left the world and *returned to the Father*,—John xvi. 28. We are to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the death of him, "who was once dead, but is now alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the invisible world;" and that having risen from the dead, he ascended up far above all heavens, and took his seat at the right hand of the throne

of the Majesty on high, there to receive the reward of all his toils and sufferings—to appear in the presence of God for us—to officiate, as the great High Priest of his church, in the heavenly sanctuary—and to prepare mansions of eternal rest for his followers. And while we sympathise with him in all the sorrows which he underwent for our sakes, we share with him in the honour and happiness with which he is rewarded, in the enjoyment of the Father's love, and the smiles of his favour.

These are some of the delightful topics which should occupy the devout recollections of the Christian brotherhood, when surrounding the table of the Lord, and when eating bread and drinking wine, in remembrance of his dying love and rising power. It is the bread and cup of the Lord, sacred to his memory. Let us now consider,—

II. How we should remember him—or with what dispositions of mind this should be done. It cannot be supposed that the Lord Jesus, when he instituted this ordinance, and said, “This do in *remembrance* of me,” meant no more by it, than that it should serve as a memento, that there had been such a person in the world—or that he might be remembered with indifference and distrust, or coldness and disrespect. To imagine this, would be to grossly mistake the ends of the institution. The Lord's Supper is the most solemn act of religious worship in which we can be engaged in this world; and it ought to call into lively exercise all the powers and faculties of our minds—especially our *faith* and *love*—our *admiration* and *gratitude*—our highest *reverence* and most profound *humility*. Let me enlarge a little upon each of these topics.

*Faith* is essential to every act of acceptable worship; for “without it, it is impossible to please God.” But necessary as it is in all duties, it is more especially so in the Lord's Supper. Without faith, this divine institution would be a useless ceremony—we could not

“discern the Lord’s body,”—we could not “eat his flesh and drink his blood,”—we could not perceive the thing signified in this ordinance; or, to speak without a figure, we could neither understand the truth which is emblematically represented in it, nor participate in the blessings that are shadowed forth by the symbols of bread and wine, without faith. When Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me,” he evidently calls us to the consideration of HIMSELF, as held forth in the Gospel testimony, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” and so it supposes that we believe him to be the Son of God—the only Saviour of lost and perishing sinners. In the institution of this ordinance, he speaks unto his disciples, as unto persons who have been instructed to know something of his character, grace, and salvation; and so it is a divinely appointed means of keeping them in mind of what they have already attained to in the knowledge of him. In partaking of the elements of bread and wine, the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, we make a practical confession of our faith in him, as our Lord and Saviour, and that we have found salvation in his death and sufferings.

*Love* is another disposition of the heart or mind, with which we should commemorate the Saviour’s death. While engaged in the observance of this divine ordinance, his followers must remember *him* in his love towards *them*, of which he has given the strongest proof that could be given, in dying for them. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” It was thus that he manifested his love towards us, and that, too, when we were enemies. And can we think of this, without feeling any glow of affection towards him in return? Can we think of his original dignity, his essential excellencies, his mediatorial qualifications, and the innumerable benefits and blessings which he has procured for us, without feeling the fire of ardent affection kindled towards

him? Let us well consider the nature and properties of his love—how pure and disinterested—how undeserved and unsolicited—how unfeigned and fervent—how full of self-denial, and how rich in its consequences! The apostle Paul began to speak of it upon one occasion, but he had no sooner entered on the subject, than he found the impossibility of doing justice to it; he therefore checks himself, and tells us that “it passeth knowledge,”—that its riches are “unsearchable.” But, surely, if we have any just perception of its out-goings, of our deep interest in it, and of our obligations to it, we shall say with the spouse, “We will remember thy love more than wine,”—Song i. 4; and it will be among the first and most pungent of our lamentations, that we are so little moved by it, and that our returns, in the way of affection, are so disproportionate to *his* loveliness and his love. But, further,

We ought to remember Christ, in this ordinance, with sentiments of mingled admiration and gratitude—*admiration* of his wonderful condescension and grace; and *gratitude*, for the benefits of his redemption. Everything pertaining to the character of our Redeemer, is well suited to awaken in us, sentiments of admiration. Not only his original dignity, as “over all and God blessed for ever,” but his assumption of our nature into personal union with the divine; his life, his sufferings, his death, his love for our perishing race, with all the train of deeply affecting circumstances; his resurrection, exaltation, and intercession, are all marvellous beyond measure; the holy angels look into them with rapture and astonishment—penetrated with amazement at the depth of the divine condescension, and the wonders of redeeming love: they never saw so much of God as in this work. How then ought we, worms of the earth, to be affected by a realizing contemplation of these things. And as to *Gratitude* and praise; who that views the subject aright, can fail to exclaim, in unison with the heavenly host: “Worthy is

the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: for he hath redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father; to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever: Amen."

Finally, we ought to remember the Saviour, in this institution, with mingled sentiments of *reverence* and *humility*. We must not forget, that while Jesus is our Saviour, he is also our God. It was so said of him in ancient prophecy: "He is thy LORD, and worship him,"—Psalm xlv. 10. The same command was given to all the heavenly host, on his taking his seat at the Father's right hand: "Let all the angels of God worship him,"—Heb. i. 6. Though with unspeakable condescension he calls his redeemed people, "not servants, but friends and brethren," we should never fail to remember the infinite distance which subsists between him and us. The Lord's Supper is a solemn act of worship, and should be performed with "reverence and godly fear." The confidence of devotional intercourse should not be suffered to degenerate into indecent familiarity; the affection to be cherished towards our Lord, the Redeemer, is altogether of a different character from human friendship. "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be revered by all that are about him." Let us hold fast the grace of the Gospel, whereby alone we can serve him acceptably; for our God is a consuming fire. Let our reverence be mingled with penitence and self-abasement of soul. While we "look on him whom our sins have pierced," it behoves us to "mourn for those sins, as one mourneth for the loss of an only son, and to be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his first-born,"—Zech. xii. 10.

And while we are on this part of the subject, may I not be allowed to interpose a word or two respecting *the stated times* of observing this ordinance. In the gene-

rality of dissenting congregations throughout this country, the practice is, as you all know, to communicate in the Lord's Supper, once a month; but it is not pretended that there is any scripture authority for this. If we look to the church in Jerusalem,—Acts ii. 42, we see plainly, that they made no difference between the observance of the “breaking of bread,” and the other branches of public worship; they continued as steadfast in the one as in the other. And of another church, viz. that of Troas, it is recorded, that “they came together on the first day of the week to break bread,”—Acts xx. 7. This is evidently spoken of as the main object of their coming together, and the first day of the week was sacred to it. In writing to the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul connects the observance of this ordinance with their *coming together into one place*,—1 Cor. xi. 20. The truth is, that it was the invariable and universal practice of the churches of Christ to observe this ordinance *weekly*, for the first three hundred years after his death; for which we have the testimony of Pliny, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, Cyprian, Victorinus Pataviensis, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. The change, from weekly to monthly communion, did not take place until Christianity had become the established religion of the Roman empire, and men had begun to mingle their own inventions with the worship of God. There is nothing to sanction it in the New Testament; and allegiance to the King of Zion, imperiously demands of us, that we abide firmly by the rule of his word, rejecting the doctrines and commandments of men, which never fail to turn from the way of truth.

III. We come now to inquire,—WHY we should remember the Saviour in the observance of the Lord's Supper; or, to consider the obligations which Christians are laid under, to comply with their Lord's injunction. And, here,—

1. The most obvious reason is, that Christ himself instituted the ordinance, and commanded his disciples to observe it. There is no precept in all the Bible delivered in terms more explicit, than the command to Christians to observe the Lord's Supper. Even the precept, "thou shalt not steal," is not more express, unequivocal, and obligatory, than the command, "Do this in remembrance of me." The same disposition, therefore, which should lead us to obey the Most High in any commanded duty, would induce us to obey him in this. If we reverence the authority of God in any case,—if we have any regard to the character and mission of the Lord Redeemer, we shall manifest our obedience to this institution, as uniformly, faithfully, and cheerfully, as in any other given instance: the authority is the same in all. He who instituted the ordinance of the breaking of bread, is "Head over *all* things" to the church; its only Lord, Lawgiver, King, and Judge. But,—

2. If any thing could give weight to the authority with which this institution is enforced, it would be found in the time and circumstances under which the command was issued. The apostle Paul gives the Corinthian church the following account of its institution:—"The Lord Jesus *the same night in which he was betrayed*, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come,"—1 Cor. xi. 23—26. And if you look into the chapter out of which I read the text, you will find that the time of observing the feast of the Passover was now at hand, when Jesus knew that he was about to suffer. The night had arrived, wherein he was to be delivered into

the hands of his enemies. When the hour was come for eating the Paschal Lamb, he sat down with the twelve apostles and said: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;" and then he drew their attention to its spiritual import, apprising them that the great things which it was intended to shadow forth, were on the eve of being accomplished in his own sufferings and death. He spent the evening in conference with his disciples, like a dying father in the midst of his family, mingling consolations with his last instructions. He knew perfectly all that was about to befall him: he knew that within a few hours he was to be torn from his beloved disciples, and on the morrow, to be taken by wicked hands, and then crucified and slain. It was therefore in the prospect of his sufferings, which he knew would issue in his death, that he instituted this ordinance, to be a standing memorial in his kingdom, in every succeeding age, until he should come again. "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end;" and he designed this ordinance to be a pledge of his dying love:—

"Do this," he said, "till time shall end;  
 "Meet at my table and record  
 "The mem'ry of your dying friend,  
 "The love of your departed Lord."

Let me add, as a further important reason, why the disciples of Christ should never fail to be found in the stated observance of this particular institution,—

3. That he has promised his special presence with them in the observance of all his commands; and that when he instituted the ordinance of the Supper, he said that he would have communion with them in it, by or through the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; for he said, he would "drink the fruit of the vine new with them in his Father's kingdom,"—Matt. xxvi. 29. In this promise he intimated, that he would hold communion and



fellowship with them in this ordinance—manifesting himself to them as he does not unto the world—giving them refreshing tokens of his favour, and an assurance of their interest in his love, and sealing them to the day of redemption. Nor is that the only text in which similar privileges and blessings are held forth to the disciples of Christ, to encourage them in this duty. In Luke xvii. 7—10, we find our Lord upon the very same subject. The substance of it is, that there are spiritual refreshments for the people of God, which stand connected with the discharge of the duties of his house, or church; and that none can reasonably expect to partake of those enjoyments, who are careless and indifferent about doing his will, in the observance of his institutions. He reminds his disciples, that He has not to thank them because they have observed his commands; that they are at best but unprofitable servants,—that they have done no more than was their duty,—and that even with so doing, he has connected a high state of privilege and spiritual enjoyment. The very same thing is taught the church of Laodicea, when he calls them to repentance, and promises on their compliance, that he will come in and sup with them, and they with him,—Rev. iii. 20.

In drawing these remarks to a close, permit me further to remind you, my brethren, that this ordinance is intended to admonish us of *the certainty of the second coming of Christ*, to raise the dead and judge the world. So the apostle says to the Corinthians: “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” This passage is an explicit declaration of one of the purposes accomplished by the observance of the Lord’s Supper. It is intended to remind us of this important truth, that the same Saviour, whose death we commemorate, whose body was once broken on the cross, and which is now symbolically broken before our eyes, will, finally, appear

as the Judge of the quick and the dead, to perfect the salvation of his people, and take them all to his eternal kingdom. What a powerful motive is this to induce us to hold fast his faith—to continue in his love—and to be found obedient to all his revealed will. “Let a man examine himself,” says the apostle, “and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” It would seem that some in the Corinthian church wholly lost sight of its true nature and design, by converting it into a common meal, so that one was intemperate in eating, and another in drinking. Thus *unworthily* did they communicate; and the Lord shewed his displeasure, by afflicting them with chastisements, or bodily diseases—“many were weak and sickly, and some actually died!” Let us take warning by this, and be careful that we do not lose sight of the grand objects exhibited in the institution—the body of Christ broken *for us*—and his blood shed for the remission of *our* sins. And while it presents him to our view in all the plenitude of his love and grace, let us never forget his dying injunction to his disciples, to “love one another as he had loved them.” The apostle reminds the Corinthian church that, among other things, this ordinance is designed to exhibit the union of a Christian church, as constituting *one body*; agreeably to which it represents their joint participation, or fellowship with Christ and one another, in feasting upon his sacrifice; “for we, being many, are *one bread* and *one body*, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Hence it appears, that the Saviour designed this institution to represent the union of the church, and its communion in his sacrifice, which are exhibited by the different members jointly partaking of the same cup and the same bread; and this shews the closeness of the intimacy, and the fervency of the love, which with unbroken harmony should ever reign in a church of Christ.

## SERMON XXVIII.

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### THE WORD OF LIFE, AND ITS EXHIBITION IN THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

— *Holding forth the word of life.*

Philip. ii. 16.

AT the time of writing this epistle, the holy apostle was placed in circumstances which few of us would be disposed to covet. He was a prisoner at Rome, bound as a malefactor for the Gospel's sake, as you may collect from chap. i. 12—14. But notwithstanding his present unenviable lot, deprived as he was of his personal liberty, his thoughts and affections still reverted to Philippi, and the welfare of the brethren there, lay near his heart. He had undergone much personal suffering, as you may all recollect, (see Acts xvi.) while engaged in planting the Gospel among them at first; and the prosperity of the church was a subject in which he was deeply interested. He hoped to see them again in the flesh,—chap. i. 25; but whether he did or not, he was particularly solicitous that their deportment might be such as became their profession,—ver. 27. And in the words of my text, he puts them in mind of the important ends of their union, and the duties that were incumbent upon them as thus connected. The subject is one from which we also may derive much valuable instruction; and with

that object in view, I propose to consider three things: I.—*What* is intended in my text by *the Word of Life*; II.—*How* that word is to be *held forth* in a Christian Church; and III.—The *Ends* that are to be answered by it.

I. By the *Word of Life*, I understand, the word of the truth of the Gospel—the doctrine concerning Christ and his salvation,—the substance of which is laid before us in the preceding part of the chapter,—ver. 6—11. This is the same thing which, on another occasion, (Eph. iv. 21.) he terms “THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus.” It comprises the truth which the apostles testified concerning Jesus Christ, the true Messiah, the Saviour of lost men; his original dignity, as existing, previously to his appearance in our world, in the *form of God*, encompassed with majesty and glory, suitable to the great God who called the universe into existence, and with whom it was no robbery to claim equality with the divine Father; and which also represents him as divesting himself of the ensigns of royalty, or laying aside the form of Deity, and assuming that of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and then humbling himself so far, as to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. To all this scene of humiliation, suffering, and death, he condescended to submit, in order to accomplish the salvation of guilty rebels; for “he died for our sins and was buried,” according to the predictions of the prophets concerning the Messiah,—Psalm xvi. 10, 11; Psalm xxii; and Isaiah liii; but God raised him from the dead, and for the suffering of death, crowned him with glory and honour, as we have it, in Heb. ii. 9—11. This, then, is the all-important subject which in my text is termed *the word*, that is, the discourse or doctrine, *of life*, and it is so termed, because,—

1. It is that doctrine which reveals, or lays open, *the way of life* and salvation for perishing sinners; it brings life and immortality to light, unfolding to the

believer's view the prospect of an eternal day beyond death and the grave, and begetting him again to the lively hope of an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens; and all this by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This sentiment is not ill-expressed by the author of the Night Thoughts, in those well known lines,—

—“In his blest life,  
I see the path; and in his death, the price;  
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme  
Of Immortality.”

But, further,—

2. The doctrine concerning Christ, is with much propriety termed the word of *life*, because it is by means of this word of truth, that those who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, are quickened, regenerated, or born again, and made alive unto God. Look for a moment at the origin of this church of the Philippians, as we find it recorded, in Acts xvi. ver. 12, &c. Paul and Silas were sent on a mission to preach the Gospel of Christ, and in the leadings of Providence, they came to Philippi, where they abode certain days; and “on the Sabbath,” says the historian, “we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither; and the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul,”—ver. 14, 15. This led to the imprisonment of these servants of the Lord, and you know the sequel; an earthquake rent the prison, and the doors flew open; the jailor was on the point of committing suicide, when he was prevented by the apostle, who spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house; believing these things, he was then filled with joy and peace, and began to live to God. But it was the doctrine concerning Christ and his salvation, as understood and believed through the power

of the Holy Spirit, that caused him to pass from "death unto life," and so was to him *the word of life*,—1 John iii. 14. See also John i. 13; James i. 18; 1 Pet. i. 23; 1 Cor. iv. 15.

3. This word, or the doctrine concerning Christ, is the *food* on which the believer *lives*, and may therefore well be called the *word of life*. Not only is it the quickening principle at the first, but it is, throughout the spiritual life, what milk from the mother's breast is to the new-born infant; it is that whereby it grows and thrives. It nourishes his faith from day to day; it invigorates his hope, sanctifies his heart, and quickens his languid affections. And so when Paul took leave of the brethren at Miletus, you may recollect that he did it in these words: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to *build you up*, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified,"—Acts xx. 32. These few observations may serve to explain what we are to understand by the word of life, and why the Gospel, or the doctrine concerning Christ, is so denominated. Let us now,—

II. Consider *how* the churches of Christ are to *hold forth* this word of life.

This epistle, you see, is addressed "to all the saints that are at Philippi, with their bishops and deacons;" and the injunction to "hold forth the word of life," is *addressed to* them, not so much as detached individuals, as in their united and social capacity, or considered as a company of believers, coming together in one place, on the first day of the week, for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification. Hence we read, that the church at Jerusalem, gathered by the ministry of the apostles, and organized by special instructions from the great Head of the Church, in order that it might serve as a pattern to all others in the order of Christ's house, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and the fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and the prayers,

praising God,"—Acts ii. 42. These were the instituted appointments of Christ, and when properly conducted, they are all adapted to hold forth the word of life. But it may be useful to particularize a little on this subject.

1. The apostle's doctrine is a comprehensive term. We have not the benefit of their personal ministry, as the church in Jerusalem had. They preached the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, converting thousands to the faith of Christ; they also laid the foundations of his kingdom in the world, gave forth divine revelation for the benefit of succeeding ages, and were gathered to their fathers. But they left their doctrine behind them, and it is all comprised in the New Testament. We have there the "form of sound words"—"the faith once delivered to the saints." It constitutes an important part of the Holy Scriptures, all of which is given "by divine inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness." The books of the New Testament were committed to writing, that they might be read in their public assemblies; and that this was a stated and not an occasional exercise, needs little proof. The reading of the Law and the Prophets was long practised in the Jewish synagogues; and we repeatedly find the apostle Paul enjoining upon Timothy and others, an attention to the same duty, in connexion with teaching and exhortation. This, therefore, is one way in which the word of life must be held forth by the churches of Christ.

2. The public *preaching* of the word of life is another divinely appointed means of holding it forth in the churches. To this end our ascended Saviour, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, bestows gifts upon men, for the work of the ministry, the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of his body, the church,—Eph. iv. 12. Pastors and teachers are raised up to labour in the word and doctrine. By the preaching of

the everlasting Gospel, the word of life is to be held forth stately in the churches: it is God's appointment for the instruction of the ignorant, the awakening of the careless and unconcerned to the things that regard their eternal peace, and thus bringing them to the knowledge of the truth: for "it pleases God, by" (what the wise men of this world are pleased to term) "the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe,"—and Christ has promised to be with those that are engaged in this work, to bless their labours to the end of time,—Matt. xxviii. 19. See the solemn charge of Paul to Timothy,—2 Tim. iv. 1—5, and of Peter and Paul to the elders,—1 Pet. v. 1—4; and Acts xx. 18, &c. Thus they are to hold forth the word of life for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort, establishment, and edification of the people of God.

3. The *exhortations of the brethren* are also an appointment of the glorified Head of the Church for holding forth the word of life. The nature of this duty is sufficiently apparent, from the words in which it is set before us. All who know the meaning of the term are aware that to exhort, is to excite to any duty, by means of words fitly spoken. Exhortation may be said to include—entreaty, or persuasion, expostulation, consolation, and rebuke. The very same duty is sometimes set before us by the apostolic writers, in terms a little varied; as when Paul says to the Colossians, "Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom, *teaching* and *admonishing* one another;" but this comes to the same thing—for *teaching* points out what is duty—*admonition* consists in giving counsel or advice concerning it—and *exhortation* is only enforcing the practice of it; so that teaching, admonishing, and exhorting, are only different branches of the same duty. Thus the apostle *exhorted* the believers to continue in the faith, and Barnabas *exhorted* them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord. The apostle was persuaded of the Romans, that they were



“full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to *admonish* one another.” One great end for which the disciples are commanded to assemble together, is, that they may have stated opportunities of mutual exhortation; for thus runs the apostolic injunction: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but *exhorting* one another.”

But, then, an important consideration here arises, on whom does this duty devolve?—is it common to all the members of the Christian church? To this I answer, *certainly not*. Females are as much members of the churches of Christ as men are; for there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus; they are entitled to the very same privileges; yet they are forbidden to speak in the church; they are commanded to keep silence, and not to teach during public worship,—1 Cor. xiii. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 11. Well; but allowing that females are excluded by divine law from public teaching, is it not the bounden duty of *all* the other sex to attend to this exercise? Again I answer, *certainly not*. To suppose so, is to set the Scriptures at variance with themselves, and to advocate a system, which goes to destroy the order of Christ’s house and introduce confusion, which no sober-minded man would do. Look, I beseech you, at the apostle’s beautiful similitude of a Christian church, in 1 Cor. xii; and it is as instructive as it is beautiful. He there compares it to the human body, which we all know is made up of a variety of different members, yet all wisely adapted to minister to the common good. “The body” i. e. the body of man, “is not one member,” says the apostle, “but many,”—ver. 14. There is the eye, the ear, the mouth, the hands, the feet, &c., &c. “God hath set all these in the body as it hath pleased him,” and he hath allotted to each its respective functions. Now transfer this figure to a Christian church, which is the mystical body of Christ. In short, to come at once to the point, I ask this question,—Is every official duty in a church common

to every member of Christ's mystical body? Is the duty under consideration, for instance,—that of teaching, admonishing, or exhorting, common to every male member? How unfounded would be the proposition. To affirm that, would be just as absurd, as it would be in me to say, that my hands were able to perform the operations of my feet, or that my ears could perform those of my mouth or eyes. "God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him,"—ver. 18, and allotted to each its respective use. "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" and so forth, asks the apostle. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? And if they were all one member—that is, if all possessed the same gift, that of speaking to exhortation, for instance, "where were the body?" My brethren, there is a beautiful order in a Christian church, when organized agreeably to divine direction, and it eminently displays the skill and the wisdom of the heavenly Architect; yet the folly of men would prompt them to break down the barrier of this order, and throw the whole into confusion. Surely this is far wrong!

I cannot dismiss this part of my subject, brethren, without reminding you, that all the gifts that are found in any Christian church, from the highest to the lowest, are not attained in the way that some people imagine, that is, by mere dint of study, or mechanical exercise; but they are bestowed by Him, who first descended into the lower parts of the earth, that he might accomplish our salvation, and, who afterwards ascended up on high, that he might fill all things,—Eph. iv. 9, 10. It is he which giveth gifts unto men—"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"—ver. 12. And observe how perfectly in unison with what has been said, is the apostle's discourse, in Rom. xii. 6—8.—"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,

whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; he that teacheth, on teaching; *or he that exhorteth, on exhortation;*" &c. Now if the discharge of this last-mentioned duty were a thing common to all the private brethren, I ask, with what propriety could it be enforced upon particular individuals to attend in an especial manner upon it? Is it not plain, from the very face of the passage, that it is a duty incumbent upon those, and those only, whom Christ has in some measure qualified for it? And observe, again, how the apostle Peter's doctrine agrees with this: "As every man hath *received the gift*, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,"—1 Pet. iv. 10. And while this subject is before us, permit me to remind you, how the case stands in regard to the subject of prayer. Is it not demonstrable that the same variety is to be found in a Christian church, in regard to prayer, which obtains in reference to teaching? Who can be insensible to the edifying prayers of some of the brethren among ourselves, who seldom if ever open their lips in the duty of exhortation? Why, I have myself heard prayers from the private brethren, humble as is their rank in life, which would put to shame half the learned divines of the age; while others, who can talk fluently, are far from excelling in that duty. How shall we account for this, except upon the principle, that whatever difference there may be between the gifts of *prayer* and of public *teaching*, yet that they are both the gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ, who divides to every man severally as he will.

Still, however, I may be asked,—admitting that what has now been said is correct, viz. that the duty of teaching and admonishing, or exhorting, the brethren, is the peculiar and exclusive duty of those, on whom the exalted Head of the Church has bestowed gifts for that purpose;—may not a brother so gifted, take whatever subject he pleases, and make it the basis of a discourse;

is he under any restriction in this respect? I think he is, by divine authority, and am confident that, if he be a wise man, he will restrict himself. The sphere of teaching that is allotted to private brethren in a church, is easily distinguishable from that which is peculiar to elders or pastors, and it is evidently more limited and restricted. To suppose that it were the same in nature, kind, and degree, would be to make one gift or office in a Christian church to interfere and clash with another, a thing which never can be allowed: for "God is not the author of confusion, but the approver and promoter of regularity, order, and peace," as may be seen in every society of the saints, where his worship is carried on in a sober, decent, and becoming manner. "My brethren," says the apostle James, "be not many *masters*, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." Those who can read the Greek Testament may know, that the word which is translated "masters," is *διδασκαλοι*, literally *teachers*. It would seem that in the apostle's day, and among the Jewish converts to whom he wrote, all were for being teachers, a thing which he solemnly warns them against. The apostle Paul has remarked the same thing of them,—1 Tim. i. 7; "desiring to be *teachers of the law*"—and these teachers of the Law in the Christian churches, became the great corrupters of the Gospel, mingling with it the wisdom of the scribe, and the philosophy of the Gentile doctor.

I shall take my leave of this part of the subject with a few obvious suggestions. You who stand forward in the church to teach, admonish, and exhort your brethren, let me recommend it to you to confine yourselves as much as possible, to *practical subjects*—the duties of the Christian life. State what the particular duty is, with plainness and precision; and enforce it by all the powerful motives which the Gospel furnishes. Put us in mind of the love and mercy of God in our redemption, the grace and condescension of the Saviour, and the obligations we are laid under to live, not unto ourselves, but unto him, and with that view, to love, wor-

ship, and serve him. And as to the style and manner of address, keep steadily in view the apostolic injunctions—"Speaking the truth in love;" "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Guard against all affectation and bombast, and refinement of style and sentiment; speak that you may be understood; and in order to this, let your language be as simple as possible. Avoid prolixity; condense, as much as you can, what you have to say. Two exhortations of ten or fifteen minutes each, are greatly to be preferred to one of half an hour. Oh, how often have I regretted to see a most impressive and useful exhortation totally spoiled by being spun out to an unreasonable length! The effect produced by the former part has been totally destroyed by the latter. Guard against repetitions, and beware of lengthening out your discourse, merely for the sake of filling up a given portion of time.

4. But, brethren, there is still one way not yet touched upon, in which every individual member of a church, whether male or female, is called upon to "hold forth the word of life;" and that is, by exhibiting the holy influence of the Gospel in all their deportment, both in the church and the world. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Such is the declared end of our election and redemption,—Titus ii. 11—14. "Let your light, then, so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ, for unto you it is given, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake,"—Phil. i. 27—29. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,"—ver. 14, 15. That we may practise the duties enjoined in these exhortations, let us,—

*Cultivate humility*, after the example of our Lord and Saviour. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"—chap. ii. 6—8. Humility is so prominent a trait in the Christian character, that without it, all our profession is an empty name.

*Love to the brethren* is another duty, in the discharge of which, every member of a Christian church should hold forth the word of life. It is the Saviour's new command, and enforced by the powerful motive of his own dying love. The first Christians abounded in it to such a degree, that it became proverbial among their enemies to remark, "See how these Christians love one another." And observe how the apostle enforces this duty on the Philippians: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having *the same love*, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves,"—Phil. ii. 1—3.

*Contentedness with the allotments of Providence*, is another important feature in the Christian character, and, therefore, the apostle dwells upon it in the context,—ver. 14, 15. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." What an example of this virtue have we in the apostle Paul himself! See chap. iv. 11—13. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need: I can do all things

through Christ which strengtheneth me." I think we must all admit that this was a very high attainment, but it is practicable, and every Christian should press after it. And observe the apostle's exhortation in ver. 6 and 7 of the same chapter. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

I shall only point you to one thing more, under this head, and that is, what the apostle dwells upon so much in the third chapter of this epistle, namely, *diligence in running the Christian race*. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing,"—Phil. iii. 8—16.

In this way every individual believer, male and female, is called to hold forth the word of life, by a walk and

conversation becoming the Gospel which they profess. And this brings me to consider,—

III. The ends to be answered by the duty enjoined upon us by the holy apostle in my text: these ends are various and important. For instance,—

1. Our own personal interests and edification are, undoubtedly, connected with our attention to it. The ordinances of Christ's house are designed to be so many wells of salvation for refreshing the souls of his people, and their wisdom consists in keeping those ordinances as his apostles delivered them to the churches. He has promised to bless the provisions of Zion, and satisfy her poor with bread; let us therefore wait on him in the ways of his appointment, for those who do so shall renew their strength.

2. The salvation of our fellow sinners is connected with it. A Christian church is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is itself founded upon the truth—the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and it is a column, or monumental pillar, on which that truth is inscribed in legible characters, so as to be known and read of all men. The name of the Most High is recorded on it—its walls are salvation, and its gates praise.

3. The reward of faithful pastors is connected with it; hence the apostle adds: "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." So again, in chap. iv. 1,—"Therefore my dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." To the same purpose he writes to the Thessalonians: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.



## SERMON XXIX.

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### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THE GROUND OF HOPE.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*

1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

THE apostle's manner of introducing this subject as he does at the commencement of his epistle, its abruptness, and its sublimity, all conspire to show us how full his heart was of it, and of the blessings which stand connected with the knowledge and belief of the Gospel. No sooner had he announced himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, and glanced at the spiritual character and high privileges of those to whom his letter was addressed, as God's chosen and sanctified people, than he breaks out into an apostrophe of grateful adoration to the God of his salvation, for that amazing display of his mercy, which appears in changing the state and condition of sinful mortals, who are brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth. The verses now read, present us with three things worthy of our regard,—

I.—The *object* of the *believer's hope*; II.—The *basis*

on which this hope is founded; and, III.—The *source* from whence it proceeds.

I. In entering upon this subject, it may not be amiss to remark, that the expectation of some future, unforeseen good, is essential to the very existence of hope. And here the object of the believer's hope is said to be that state of blessedness, which is in reserve for the people of God, when they have done with the trials and afflictions of this world—a state on which they shall enter at death, and which shall be perfected at the resurrection of the just, when their bodies shall be delivered from the grave, and fashioned like unto the glorified body of the Son of God.

That the apostle is not here referring to any earthly state of happiness, is put beyond dispute, by the express language of the text, which tells us, that the blessing hoped for is *reserved in heaven*, for such as hold fast the belief of the Gospel to the end. And, indeed, independently of this, there is nothing in the Gospel revelation that gives a Christian the hope of any inheritance, or state of happiness, in this world—its language runs in a quite contrary direction. “Here we have no abiding city.” The hope of the Gospel is the hope of that which is laid up for saints in heaven,—Col. i. 5. Such were the afflictions that attended the apostles in the discharge of their labours, that we find them saying: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are, of all men, the most miserable.” But this hope, or object of hope, reserved in heaven, is a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

In my text the apostle terms it an inheritance—that is, a possession or property—it is the inheritance of the saints in light. Paradise was bestowed upon our first parents as a possession, or inheritance; and a happy place it was, so long as they retained their innocency; but sin entered—the possession became defiled and faded away; for its primeval inhabitants were expelled the

inheritance, and a flaming sword which turned every way barred their re-admittance into the once holy and happy abode.

The land of Canaan was given to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession or inheritance—a place of rest, after all their wanderings in the wilderness—rest from their enemies round about, and the enjoyment of those earthly blessings, which were the subject of promise in the old covenant. But even this inheritance did not correspond with the description given in my text of the Christian's hope. It was corruptible in its nature and properties—it was abominably defiled by the wickedness of the Canaanites, and even of that of Israel, and, in consequence, it faded away. For as the apostle reasons with the Hebrews: "If Joshua had given them rest, there would not have been another rest spoken of, to be afterwards enjoyed." It did not prove to be a rest in the proper sense of the term; and even as an earthly one, it faded away; for the possessors of it were, for their iniquitous conduct, carried into captivity, and eventually driven out and dispersed abroad, as fugitives among all nations.

Now in opposition to any inheritance of the nature of either of those of which we have been speaking, that which is the object of the Christian's hope, stands pre-eminently distinguished in various respects. It is an inheritance not placed upon this perishable globe, which will presently be burnt up—it is reserved in heaven,—ver. 4, there it is laid up to be enjoyed,—Col. i. 5.—it is an inheritance "among the saints in light,"—it is a kingdom, the everlasting kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—it is a state of glory—of glory, honour, and immortality, even eternal life.

The description which the apostle gives of this inheritance, in the passage before us, seems to resolve itself into two particulars.

1. Its *absolute purity*. It cannot be corrupted by sin—no unclean thing can enter into it—nothing that

defileth or maketh a lie. It is that state in which the blessed God himself dwells with his people, and in which they behold his face in righteousness, where they will associate with angels, and all the redeemed company—a state from which all sin and sorrow are for ever excluded—where the inhabitants shall no more say they are sick, for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities. One of the most interesting views which we can take of this inheritance is, that it is what the Redeemer himself is now in the possession of, as the reward of his obedience unto death, and that in behalf of all his people.

2. It is *unfading in its duration*. It is an everlasting possession—it shall not be forfeited like Paradise—it shall not be the subject of dispossession like Canaan—it shall not, like earthly possessions, be rested from us by fraud or injustice—it will be durable as the throne of the Almighty—from age to age, beginning to begin;—it is *eternal* in the heavens.

II. Let us now direct our attention to the *basis* on which the believer's hope of this inheritance is founded: and that is, the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

To this they are said to be *begotten again*—which implies that it is not *natural* to them; and so far is that from being the case, the scripture testifies, that while men are ignorant of the Gospel, they are “*without hope, and without God in the world,*”—Eph. ii. 12. It is, however, an important inquiry—how is it that the resurrection of Christ comes to possess this regenerating power—how is it that it begets believers again to the hope of this inheritance? In answer to this, let it be observed,—

1. That the *resurrection* of Christ manifestly implies his *death*; for had he not died, according to the Scriptures, he could not have risen again from the dead. Now consider what the Gospel testifies concerning his death, with the declared end and design of it, and it

will serve to set this subject in a clear point of view. Let us hear his own account of this matter. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,"—Matt. xx. 28. "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received from my Father,"—John x. 11, 18. From his own lips, then, we learn that the very express purpose for which he came into the world, was to lay down his life for his people—and that his death was a voluntary act of obedience to the will of his heavenly Father. Now let us hear his apostles on the same subject: "God raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,"—Rom. iv. 24, 25. "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and on the third day, he rose again, according to the Scriptures,"—1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, by whose stripes ye are healed,"—1 Pet. ii. 24. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever; Amen,"—Rev. i. 5, 6.

These texts of scripture plainly teach us, if they teach any thing at all, that the very end for which the Son of God died was to expiate sin—to make an atonement for the transgression of others—that in his death he bare the punishment which the sins of his people deserved, and so procured the pardon and acceptance of all who are interested in his death; for "he was delivered up unto death for their offences, and raised again for their justification." The inference which we deduce from this is, that his death did not

take place on account of any sin of his own, but in order to procure the salvation of others, who, by a sovereign divine constitution, were connected with Him in his death, and in whose place he died.

2. As Christ, in his death, sustained the persons of all the elect, acting as their surety and representative, and paying the ransom price of their redemption; so was his resurrection available to their discharge from the condemning sentence of the divine law, which consigned them to death, and their title also to the heavenly inheritance; and in this way his resurrection begets them again to the hope of this inheritance.

The apostle Paul has set this subject in the clearest light, in the 1 Cor. xv; where he shews us, that as Christ died for our sins, so in his resurrection he did not rise merely as a solitary individual, if I may so speak, but as the first fruits of all who sleep in him; that is, as the sample of an abundant harvest—or as the head of a numerous body who, in due time, shall also rise in virtue of their connexion with him. “Now is Christ risen from the dead,” says the apostle, “and become the first fruits of them that sleep; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead: for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,”—ver. 20—22. “But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits: afterwards, they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

3. But the Saviour not only rose from the dead, and in so doing, secured the rising again of all for whom he died; he also *ascended into heaven*, and as the forerunner of his people, took possession of a kingdom, which was given him by his heavenly Father, as the reward of his deep humiliation and voluntary abasement; and this he did in the name, and on the behalf of all his brethren—and the kingdom thus taken is the inheritance for which his people hope. This kingdom he has graciously promised to all his faithful followers. “Because I live,” said he, “ye shall live also.”

that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,"—John xvii. 24. "I go and prepare a place for you: but I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,"—chap. xiv. 3. These texts shew the connexion which subsists between Christ and his believing people in his resurrection, and the grounds on which their hope of the inheritance is founded, viz. the perfection of his work of obedience and sacrifice, the good pleasure of God in that work, and the promise of the Saviour, that they shall reign with him in life.

4. Before we dismiss this part of the subject, I take leave to remark, that in no one view does the Gospel of our salvation appear more *divine* and *interesting* than as it counteracts the ravages of sin, death, and the grave. These great enemies of our peace, which blast our prospects, cut off our earthly joys, and reign with uncontrolled sway over the human race, meet with no resistance on this side of the tomb, except from the Gospel. "Sin reigns unto death." "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgement." "The grave is the house appointed for all living." "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," was the sentence pronounced upon our first parent when he transgressed the divine prohibition, and we see it has taken effect, not only upon him, but upon all his descendants. "Our fathers, where are they?—and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Where are now the nations that existed before the flood? Where are the generations that existed from the days of Noah, to the coming of the Messiah? and where are the generations of eighteen hundred years, that have preceded us under his reign? Death, like a conqueror, has seized them all: their bodies lie mingled with the clods of the valley, gracing the triumphs of death, and as trophies of the victorious career of the king of terrors. But is

there no gleam of light darting athwart this gloomy scene? Nature is dumb—even reason appalled—but the Gospel speaks; and not merely speaks—it brings life and immortality to light. It speaks not only in promises, which are great and precious, but it speaks in facts—facts which are indubitable, and that none can overthrow—facts that all may understand. What an interesting scene is that which is presented to us in the eleventh chapter of John's Gospel, viz. Jesus at the grave of Lazarus. Figure to yourselves for a moment, the sisters of the deceased, absorbed in grief, accompanied by their sorrowing friends, all assembled around the affecting spot, when Jesus, who tenderly loved the deceased, gave vent to the emotions of his labouring breast, and burst into tears. Hear the voice of Martha: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Observe the condescension of the gracious Saviour in his efforts to comfort her: "Thy brother shall rise again. I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." With these consoling strains he revives the faith of Martha; and as soon as the stone is removed from the mouth of the cave in which Lazarus had now lain four days, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and thanks the Father for having heard him. His enemies said, that he did his mighty works by the assistance of the devil. Here, in the act of performing the greatest of them, he prays with perfect assurance of being heard, ascribes the honour to God, and takes to himself the title of the messenger of Heaven. Think of the suspense and earnest attention of the multitude, while, after the sepulchre is opened, Jesus is uttering his solemn prayer. How would the suspense be increased, when Jesus, to show the whole multitude that the resurrection of Lazarus was his deed, calls with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth!" And what would be their astonishment, when they saw this command instantly obeyed! The man who had



lain four days in the sepulchre, sliding his limbs down from the cell, and standing before it erect and upright! The bandages prevent him from moving forward, when Jesus again commands: "Loose him, and let him go." Such is the evangelist's simple and unvarnished account of this wonderful event; and the contexture of the narration is such, as to efface from our minds every objection against the consistency of it, and the greatness of the miracle is obvious. We behold in this work—the Lord of Life. To restore a man who has seen corruption, is the province, or prerogative, of Him alone who created him. In raising Lazarus from the dead, the Lord Jesus has given us a sample of the general resurrection, and a sensible sign that he is able to deliver from the second death; for such is the meaning of the expression: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die—that is, shall not die for ever."

But the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, was only a prelude to a still more stupendous fact—Jesus himself rose: for it was not possible that he should be holden of the grave; and he rose as the first-fruits of a vast and abundant harvest—as the first-born of many brethren, and, as a pledge, that as the Head arose, so must all the members rise also in their order—"Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." In discoursing on this subject to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul shows, that on the truth and certainty of the resurrection of Christ, rests all the hopes of his people; that if he rose, they must, as a necessary consequence, rise also; and, on the other hand, if they do not rise, it must be because Christ himself is not risen: so inseparably linked together are the two events, that they mutually involve each other. And you may recollect that it is in this way the apostle administers consolation to those who had been bereaved of their Christian friends: "I would not have you to

sorrow as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words,"—1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 18.

III. Let us now advert to the *source or origin* of this blessed hope—the hope of the heavenly inheritance; for this constitutes an important feature in the passage.

Now, if you examine the apostle's words again, you will find him tracing this blessing, the hope of the heavenly inheritance, up to the *mercy of God*, as its source, origin, or fountain. It is of his *abundant mercy* that any of the apostate race of Adam are begotten again to this lively hope. And this corresponds with what the apostle Paul said to the Thessalonians, where he blesses God for having given them "everlasting consolation and good hope *through grace*,"—2 Thess. ii. 16. Indeed the whole plan of our salvation is resolved by the inspired writers into the sovereign grace and mercy of the Most High. The whole is according to an eternal purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world was called into existence. That purpose had for its end or object the bringing of many sons unto glory,—Heb. ii. 10. But with whom did this saving purpose originate? with whom did the Most High take counsel, and who instructed Him?—Neither men nor angels. "But God, who is *rich in mercy*, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." It is by *grace* we are saved; and so the apostle, in my text, resolves our being in possession of this hope, into *the abundant mercy of God*. But mercy imports compassion exercised towards the worthless, the wretched, the miserable; it is the exercise of free, unmerited favour; and having for its object the salvation of guilty rebels who deserved to perish, it at once con-

veys the impression of the glorious character of God, as the God of salvation, and of the sinfulness and ruined condition of those towards whom it is exercised.

We are so apt to lose sight of what was our real state, and to allow the impression which it is calculated to produce upon us to slip from our minds, that it may be useful to dwell a little upon the subject in this place.

Our state—that is, the state of mankind in general—of all the human race, is naturally a state of guilt and ruin. By our connexion with the first Adam, we became subject to mortality—death passes upon all men, in virtue of their connexion with our first parents in the first transgression—“it is appointed unto men once to die.” But that is not the whole of the detriment which came upon us through Adam’s sin; for not only did our bodies become doomed to dissolution, but we also derive from him a corrupt nature, a propensity to evil, an inclination to sin, which manifests itself universally in all his posterity, as they grow up. For no sooner is a human being capable of knowing good from evil,—the functions of moral government,—than the seeds of depravity manifest themselves by the alienation of the heart from God and his ways. On this is founded the testimony of Scripture, that “the whole world is become guilty before God,”—Rom. iii. 19. “Children of wrath,”—Eph. ii. 3; possessed of a “carnal mind, which is enmity against God,”—Rom. viii. 7. Now, wherever the Gospel comes, it finds men in this state, that is, sinful, vile, and depraved; and it is a proclamation of mercy from heaven, suited to their guilty state. It does not prescribe a round of religious duties, by the performance of which they are to appease the divine anger, and make their peace with God; but it assures them, that God hath himself provided a ransom to deliver from going down to the pit; that help was laid for us upon one that was mighty to save;

that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; that his righteous soul was made an offering for sin; that in his sacrifice, divine justice hath obtained the fullest satisfaction; that God is well-pleased in him for his righteousness' sake; and that he freely forgives the transgressions of all who believe in him. Now divine grace and mercy appear in the whole plan and process of man's salvation. In the gift of God's only and well-beloved Son, to be the Mediator; in his sufferings, death, resurrection, and exaltation; in the calling, justification, perseverance, and final glorification of believers;—in all these, grace reigns through righteousness, and divine mercy is magnified by the bestowment of eternal life on sinners spiritually dead, until begotten again to a living hope, by the glorious Gospel and the Holy Spirit of the ever blessed God,—the source of LIFE, and LIGHT, and LOVE.

I know, indeed, there is a class of professors who object altogether to the representation now given of the state of human nature in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, and our connexion with the first Adam, our fœderal head. They admit that we became mortal through his fall, but deny that we derive any corruption of nature, or depravity of heart, in virtue of our connexion with him; and though they cannot deny that sin is in the world, that the world is overrun by it; that not an individual escapes its contagious influence, for that would be to contradict the divine testimony; yet they contend that sin is *propagated by example*, and in no other way. But to this opinion I never could subscribe, because I think it contradicts the scripture, and leads to manifest absurdities. I would ask those who hold it, from whom did Cain borrow the example of *murder*, when he slew his brother Abel? or that of *envy*, which prompted the crime,—1 John iii. 12? Upon their principle, a man could not covet if his eyes were shut, or he happened to be born blind!

The apostle Paul, however, gives us a different account of his experience,—Rom. vii. 7. Besides, how comes it to pass that men are so prone to follow bad examples rather than good ones? And then look at the formidable array of witnesses for the contrary doctrine, and the weight of evidence produced by prophets, evangelists, and apostles, in the Holy Scriptures!—Gen. vi. 5, and viii. 21; Psalm xiv, and li. 5, and lviii. 3; Job xiv. 4, and xv. 14; Prov. xxii. 15; Jer. xvii. 9; Mark vii. 21—23; Rom. iii. 12—18; chap. v. 12—19, and vii. 18; Eph. ii. 3, and iv. 18. Let these Scripture testimonies, I say, be accurately weighed in the balance of the sanctuary; observe the glosses which are had recourse to, in order to get rid of them, particularly,—Psalm li. 5, and Eph. ii. 3, and I think you will agree with me, that there is no accounting for those things, without admitting the Scripture doctrine of original sin; and that every attempt to account for the universal depravity of mankind upon any other principle is vain, and must land in absurdity.

1. This subject admits of a most pointed personal application to every hearer. Let each one ask himself—Am I in possession of this hope of the eternal inheritance? If so, on what is the expectation founded? “The hope of the hypocrite,” we are told, “shall perish.” If the hope which you have be such as will stand the test, it must come to you *through grace*—that is, through *mercy abounding* to the chief of sinners. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly—God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,”—Rom. v. 6, 8. Here then is cause for thanksgiving to God—this is the ground on which the apostle Peter broke out into a rapture, as in my text: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." In this hope there is an abundant source of joy and rejoicing, amidst all the trials and afflictions of the present life. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind; be sober in your enjoyment of the things of this world, and hope perfectly for the grace which shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"—ver. 6—13.

2. Remember, that hope is of a *purifying* nature—it is one of the principles of sanctification. The apostle John teaches us this fact in most decisive terms; for having expressed his admiration at the manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; and looking forward to the time when this adoption and sonship shall be manifested; when we shall see Christ and be conformed to his image, he adds, that "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he, the Lord, is pure,"—1 John iii. 1—3. But the apostle Paul seems to carry the matter, if possible, further than this—for he tells us that "we are *saved* by hope,"—Rom. viii. 24; and he then goes on to explain the nature of hope, as having respect to some *unseen good*. "What a man seeth," says he, "why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Now to understand something of the sanctifying influence of hope, we have only to consider, how it would be with a person in humble life, destitute of the advantages of education, who during his minority, became heir to a large estate, of which he was to take possession upon his coming of age. Would he not be anxious to form his manners, his habits, and his character, in a consistency with the superior and more refined state of society, in which he was destined to move? Just so it is with the Christian, when begotten again to the lively hope of this inheritance. He looks back with disgust and self-loathing on his former low habits; is

ashamed of the practices in which he indulged, and makes it his continual study to form his character into a correspondency with the state of society in the heavenly world—the general assembly and church of the first-born—an innumerable company of angels—Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant,—and God the Judge of all. The doctrines and promises of the Gospel are so many *motives* to the believer to follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord—to set his affections on things above, not on things on the earth—to be denied unto all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to mortify his members which are upon the earth.

3. The subject we have had under consideration calls loudly upon the attention of the thoughtless and unconcerned—upon unbelievers of every class. That which is here exhibited as a matter of joy and thankfulness to real Christians, invites their most cordial reception. The truths now stated are only the doctrines which the Gospel declares to all who hear it; such as that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—that he died and rose again, having completed the work of redemption—that the things concerning him were written for the express purpose that they might believe him to be the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life through his name. “For this is the promise which he hath promised us,” namely, those who believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and continue in the faith grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel—“even *ETERNAL life*,”—1 John ii. 25. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life,”—chap. v. 11, 12.

I conclude with the apostle Peter's exhortation to those to whom he wrote his epistle, and which is equally applicable to all, who, through grace, are in

possession of the same faith and hope: "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope perfectly for the grace which is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, "BE YE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."—1 Pet. i. 13—16.

Bless'd be the everlasting God,  
 The Father of our Lord;  
 Be his abounding mercy prais'd,  
 His majesty ador'd.

When from the dead he rais'd his Son,  
 And call'd him to the sky,  
 He gave our souls a lively hope,  
 That they should never die.

What though our flesh by Adam's sin,  
 Is doom'd to see the dust;  
 Yet as the Lord our Head arose,  
 So all his member's must.

There's an inheritance divine,  
 Reserv'd against that day;  
 'Tis uncorrupted, undefil'd,  
 And cannot fade away.

Saints by the pow'r of God are kept  
 Till the salvation come;  
 We walk by faith as stranger's here,  
 Till Christ shall call us home.



# SERMON XXX.

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## ON REGENERATION.

*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.*

James i. 18.

THE doctrine of *regeneration* is taught both in the Old and New Testaments. In the former it constituted a prominent article of the new and everlasting covenant,—Jer. xxxi. 33; and Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27; but it is in the New Testament that, like all the other doctrines of the Christian system, it is more clearly unfolded, and its necessity more fully insisted on. Our Lord, in his memorable conversation with Nicodemus, in John iii, not only taught us the necessity of it, in order to our seeing, or entering into, the kingdom of heaven; but he also teaches us its *nature*, as being of a spiritual kind, contrasting it with the fleshly birth; and he also shews that it is the work of an immediate divine agency—sovereign and uncontrolled in its operations: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit,”—ver. 8.

The apostle James is treating of the same subject, in the passage before us, and his doctrine is in perfect harmony with that of his divine Master. A little be-

fore the text he borrows a similitude from the greatest of the heavenly bodies, the sun, which is the fountain of natural light, to teach us some suitable apprehensions of its adorable Creator, who is the "Father of lights," and from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift; and that our God not only created the sun, and gave him the capacity of diffusing his beams over our system; but that all spiritual, moral, and intellectual light comes down from him. For not only did he make man at the beginning in his own image and likeness, giving him understanding, reason, and conscience; thus raising him in the scale of creation greatly above all the other tribes of living creatures which people this earth; but when man, by the fall, lost the knowledge of his Maker, and, consequently, that happiness which lies in his favour, it is God who touches his heart anew, and so renews him in the spirit of his mind; creating him anew in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of his Maker; for, "of his own will," says the apostle, "begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

In attempting an illustration of this important subject, I shall;—I.—Make a few observations on the *nature and necessity* of Regeneration; II.—Consider the *means* by which it is effected; III.—Offer some remarks on what appear to me, very *mistaken views* respecting this subject; and, IV.—Conclude by shewing—the *Improvement* we are called to make of it.

I. As respects the *nature and necessity of the New Birth*, I observe, in general, that it does not consist in the addition of any new organs or faculties being given to those that are the happy subjects of it, either bodily or mental. When the sacred writers speak of it, they generally use figurative language. They term it circumcision—dying—rising again—living anew—quickenings—seed—a new creation, with various other similar terms, all of which are used *metaphorically*;

and if we would not be misled ourselves, or mislead others, we must reduce metaphor to meaning, and by that means ascertain the real import of these scriptural terms.

When we examine the holy Scriptures, we find that Adam, our first parent, and fœderal head, stood as the representative of all his posterity, in such a way as that they, all of them, individually, became partakers with him in the effects of his transgression. It is in consequence of this, that we all became mortal, and subject to the death of the body, as the apostle Paul explicitly states, Rom. v. 12—14,—“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for in that one man all have sinned.” But this is not the whole of the injury, damage, or loss, that we, his descendants, derive from our connexion with the father of our race. Human nature became corrupted at the fountain head; and from him we derive a propensity to evil, a moral taint, a depraved nature, a bias of the will and affections to depart from God, which shews itself more or less from the first dawnings of reason, by the alienation of the heart from God and his ways, a disposition to cast off his fear, not liking to retain the knowledge of him in our minds, and seeking our happiness in the good things of this world—riches, and honour, and the pleasures of sense, to the neglect of the Creator, in whose favour alone true and solid happiness is to be found. And this is described as the state and condition of all the human race, every son and daughter of Adam, however distinguished by birth and education, by country and climate, or any other adventitious circumstances, such as laws, customs, civilization, or refinement. Wherever we meet with man, we find him the subject of depravity of heart, and prone to transgression from the womb. Hence the awful terms in which the Scriptures speak of mankind at large: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth;

there is none that seeketh after God; they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one,"—Rom. iii. 10—12. The same inspired writer describes our natural state in these affecting terms—as “dead in trespasses and sins—walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and being by nature children of wrath, even as others,”—Eph. ii. 1—3.

Such is the scriptural representation of our fallen state by nature and practice, and on this is founded the necessity of regeneration, or our being born again, in order to our enjoying the favour of God, and entering into his kingdom.

II. Let us now turn our attention to the *means* which Infinite Wisdom has devised and appointed, for producing this important and saving change on the naturally depraved hearts of men; and this, the apostle, in the words of my text, states to be, “the word of truth”—under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God; for “of his own will begat he us.”

1. By *the word of truth*, we are, doubtless, to understand, “the word of the truth of the Gospel,”—the doctrine which the holy apostles made known concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, his crucifixion and death, his resurrection, and the glory that followed; all which is summed up in the comprehensive phrase of “Christ crucified,” and “the truth as it is in Jesus.” Sometimes it is called, “the word of life”—and this because it reveals and makes known the great salvation which the beloved Son of God procured for guilty rebellious men, by his mission into this world, through his mediation, by his vicarious sufferings unto death, whereby he expiated their sins, and became the author of eternal redemption to all that believe and obey him.

It was for this purpose, viz. that men might know the way of salvation, that Christ commissioned his Gospel to be preached in all the world, and to every creature, with a gracious promise annexed, that, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" and also an awful threat, that "he that believeth not shall be damned," that is, perish everlastingly. Hence the commission which he gave to Saul of Tarsus: "I now send thee unto the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me,"—Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

As this subject is very important, and deserves a further illustration, let us dwell a little upon it. The preaching of the Gospel of peace and salvation is a wonderful expedient, divinely adapted, under the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, to produce the moral renovation of the human mind, by illuminating the understanding, subduing the will, and influencing the affections, to love God, and keep his commandments. Consider, for a moment, what the Gospel testifies concerning the guilty, fallen state of all our race, while ignorant of the Gospel of the grace of God.

Being *without Christ*, they are "without hope, and without God in the world." Their understandings are darkened through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their minds; and they are alienated from the life of God, not seeking the happiness which lies in his favour, but giving themselves over to lasciviousness,—Eph. ii. 12; and chap. iv. 18. Such was the melancholy state of moral degeneracy which Paul was sent to rectify and heal; and what were the means which he was to employ in order to effect it? Why, simply the preaching of the doctrine of Christ crucified, the proclamation of Christ's Gospel, which he declares was "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed." This doctrine meets the sinner's

case at all points. It addresses him as with a voice of thunder—sets before him his guilty, helpless, ruined condition, as a rebel against God—a breaker of his just, righteous, and holy law—and as such, condemned by divine justice to wrath and the curse; and had it nothing more to say, it could lead only to despair. But it is the ministry of reconciliation; it declares, that “peace is made by the blood of the cross,”—that Christ hath made a full, adequate, and complete atonement for sin, by the shedding of his own blood—blood of infinite efficacy and value—that divine justice is satisfied with what he has done—that God is well-pleased for his righteousness’ sake—and that now grace reigns, through that righteousness in bestowing eternal life on all that take refuge in the sanctuary of that blood.

This doctrine gives such a manifestation of the love of the divine Father, and in giving his beloved Son to die for the ungodly; and such a display of the love, condescension, and compassion of the Redeemer, in dying for them, to deliver them from everlasting destruction;—as must, when it gains access to the conscience and the heart, disarm the sinner of his enmity; reconcile him to the true character of that God against whom he has offended, and become a new instinct in him, producing repentance, faith, love, and all holy obedience. It turns him from the error of his way, and the love and practice of sin, and leads him to delight in God and keep his commandments, to seek His favour as his chief good, and to walk in his ways. Thus he is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. It strips him at once of all his fancied attainments, his former grounds of boasting and glorying; it leads him to be denied to his own wisdom and righteousness; and causes him to rejoice in Christ alone, as made of God unto all that believe,—“Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.”

2. But then we must always keep this in view, that the Gospel owes all its saving efficacy to divine influ-

ence, or the power of God accompanying it; for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Paul could plant the seed, and Apollos water it, but it was God only could give the increase. He was the honoured instrument of begetting the Corinthians to the faith, by preaching Christ’s Gospel among them, and he claimed to be their spiritual father; but the weapons of his warfare were “mighty *through God*,” and through Him alone. And in all this HE displays his sovereignty; for it is entirely “*of his own will*,” that he begets men to the faith of the Gospel. The very same doctrine, preached in the very same sermon, shall be to one, the savour of life unto life—enlightening, convicting, humbling, and sanctifying him; while to another, it is the savour of death unto death—exciting in him the malignant passions of pride, envy, hatred of God, and contempt of the Gospel of his grace. Thus it is that “many are called, but few chosen,” verifying the Saviour’s doctrine: “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” The Lord must open the sinner’s heart, as he did that of Lydia, ere the word of truth can gain an entrance there, so as to be implanted as the seed of regeneration.

III. I shall now proceed to notice some very erroneous sentiments that are to be found among professors, relative to the doctrine of regeneration, and which, wherever they are received, must have a very pernicious influence on the minds of men.

I may possibly be thought by some to trifle with the subject, in condescending to notice the doctrine of our *national* standards of religion, touching the article of regeneration, or the new birth; but having myself had the misfortune to be trained up in a reverence for that unscriptural system, I advert to it for the sake of others, who may have been similarly circumstanced, if into the

hands of any such, these printed pages should fall. The Book of Common Prayer teaches, that it is the duty of Christian parents to bring their children to the baptismal font, on Sunday or other Holy-day, to be baptized, and that, by such initiatory rite, "they are made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." It was, indeed, the preacher's lot to undergo this *opus operatum*, when an infant; but it is some consolation to him to know also, that in all this idle mummery, he was a mere *passive* instrument in the hands of others, and from whose error he never could derive one particle of benefit; and he is now thankful to have been delivered from such a system of delusion.

The only light in which he can now regard "baptismal regeneration," as maintained and contended for by the high church party of the establishment, is that of a *political device* for drawing a form of Christianity over whole countries and nations, conferring upon them a "form of godliness without its power"—the name without the thing—thus making them Christians in Britain, for the very same reason that they would have been Mahometans in Turkey, or Brahmans in Hindostan. This is a monstrous perversion and profanation of a sacred name and title, and is manifestly one of the main pillars of Popery! But what are we to think of men, who assume to be the ministers of Christ, and who, even in the present day, can "thank God that, by means of—this solemn farce,—he has *regenerated* the soul of this infant;" whereas, stubborn facts prove, that, as soon as the child becomes a moral agent, it gives evidence that it is *not* regenerated at all!

But waiving any further animadversions on the subject of baptismal regeneration, as maintained by the advocates of *national* Christianity, and applied to infants, I now proceed to notice, what to me is a novelty, namely, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as maintained, contended for, and advocated by some Antipaido Baptists. Hitherto it has been common to this class of professors, at least in our own country, to con-



sider the ordinance of baptism, when administered to adults, on a personal profession of their faith in the Son of God, as wholly *emblematical*, or, to use the language of our national formulary, as “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.” This, I say, has hitherto been the commonly received doctrine of the advocates of adult’s, or believer’s baptism in this country; and this ground they have found impregnable of assault, because it is based upon scripture. But of late years a class of Baptists has risen up in the United States of America, who carry matters much farther than even our high churchmen—contending for the perfect identity of *immersion* and the *new birth*! But I will give their own words, as I find them in a recent publication from the pen of the champion of the party, and now lying before me. Thus he writes: “We contend, that being ‘born again,’ and being immersed, are, in the apostle’s style, two names for the same action.”\* Here, then, there can be “no mistake,” as to the thing contended for—it is the perfect identity of *immersion* and *regeneration*. The new birth, according to this, is not effected by means of the word of truth, through the power of God, as taught in my text, but by the external rite of immersing the body in water. “Well,” but, some may say, “the advocates of this new doctrine, may, nevertheless, contend for an inseparable connexion between the act of immersion and the communication of new light to the mind, by means of which the baptized person is born again, and so converted to God.” No such thing: on the contrary, they absolutely deny the *possibility* of the thing! Take their own words: “There *can be* no new light communicated to the mind, no new arguments offered to convert men to God—all the *converting power of the Holy Spirit is exhibited in the divine word.*”†

Here, then, we have the matter without disguise. Put these two things together, namely, the absolute *denial*

\* See *Christianity Restored*, by A. Campbell, Bethany, 1835, p. 279.

† *ibid.* p. 361.

of any divine influence, or, which is the same thing, the power of the Holy Spirit, communicating light to the mind, and the perfect identity of immersion and the new birth,—I say, put these two things together, and the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, in its worst form, stands prominently forward to our view, naked and without disguise. According to this new doctrine, the change which passes upon the mind of a sinner, commonly termed “regeneration,” or the new birth, and by which he is quickened from death unto life, and turned from the power of Satan unto God, is all effected by the washing of the body in water! And this is the new theory, which is to “restore Christianity,” in its pristine perfection, after being buried in obscurity for “a time, and times, and the dividing of time.” Hitherto, we thought we had learned from the Scriptures, that persons ought to be Christians, that is, believers in Christ, *previously* to their being baptized in his name; for upon any other hypothesis, we were unable to account for the conduct of the apostles and evangelists in insisting upon a profession of faith, from those whom they immersed; but this new theory goes upon totally different principles. It insists that sinners are born again, or regenerated, and so made Christians, *in and by* the *act* of immersion. This is baptismal regeneration with a witness! and the person who holds it, can never *consistently* reject the Papal doctrine of transubstantiation; for they stand upon precisely the same ground, as will be obvious to every one, who gives himself the trouble to examine the matter narrowly. They both take their rise from interpreting *literally*, what the inspired writers spoke figuratively, concerning both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Excellently has it been remarked by a late writer, when defending the doctrine of the Holy Spirit’s influence, in the regeneration and sanctification of believers, that “it may justly seem strange, that any who believe the Scriptures, should embrace such a sentiment; (as the denial of the ordinary influence of the Spirit, to make the word effectual to the

salvation of men;) for though they should have no experience of any such influence in their own case, it would be but reasonable to allow, that the word of God is clear and express upon the subject." But I fear I have dwelt too long on these errors, and now dismiss them, by calling your attention to some of the characteristic properties of that change which takes place in regeneration, when effected by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the word of truth.

1. The change which is produced upon the mind or heart of a sinner, in regeneration, must be *great*. This will appear, by a due consideration of the language which is used by the sacred penmen in describing it. For instance, it is termed a being "born again,"—John iii. 3; chap. i. 13. The apostle Paul repeatedly designates it "a new creation,"—2 Cor. v. 17, or "being created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works,"—Eph. ii. 10; a being "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,"—Col. i. 13. From all this it is manifest, that this change does not consist in empty speculations—a few cold forms—a little outward decorum,—or some faint desires. For, observe,—

2. It is a *universal*, not a partial change. It is called a "new man," as opposed to "the old man" with his corrupt and sinful deeds,—Col. iii. 10; and concerning those who are the real subjects of this change, it is said, that to them "all things are become new,"—2 Cor. v. 17. A variety of circumstances may produce a partial change upon a sinful mortal. Occasional convictions of guilt in the conscience may often be seen to reform the outward conduct for a time. Such, we know, was the case with that wicked man, king Herod; for when he heard the preaching of John the Baptist, it is said that "he did many things, and heard him gladly,"—Mark vi. 20; but those convictions were very transient; they soon wore off, and Herod returned to his old courses! So it is recorded of ancient Israel: when they saw the judgments of God upon their enemies—"then they believed his words, and sang his praises—but, alas!

they soon forgot his works, they waited not for his counsel,"—Psalm cvi. 12, 13. The principle of self-righteousness, too, may produce a universal change in the outward conduct, while the heart remains the same. The truth of this was exemplified in the Pharisees of our Lord's time, who thanked God that "they were not like other men," though they were the greatest enemies of Christ and his Gospel that were to be found. And this leads me to remark another property of this change.

3. It is *internal*, or an inward change. Hence it is termed, "a new heart,"—Ezek. xi. 19; "putting a new spirit within them, or being renewed in the spirit of their mind,"—Eph. iv. 23; having the divine law written in the heart,—Heb viii. 10. We all know that an outward reformation may be produced by age, by temper, or mere external circumstances; by principles of selfishness, or motives of present convenience; by pride of character, or the love of reputation, seeking the esteem and applause of our fellow creatures, as was strikingly manifested in the case of the Pharisees of old. But,—

4. The change which constitutes the new creature, must be *predominant*: in other words, it must have the ascendancy, and prevail over its opposite, so as to have the real government of the man; otherwise, it is not genuine. Whatever governs marks the character: this is an invariable scripture maxim. "Know ye not," says an apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey,"—Rom. vi. 16. And our Lord teaches the same doctrine, when he says, "No man can serve two masters," &c.,—Matt. vi. 24. Hence, believers are said to "put off the old man with his corrupt deeds, and to put on the new man,"—Col. ii. 9, 10.

5. And, finally, this change is *habitual*. It is not a mere temporary impression, consisting only in a warm glow of affection, occurring at intervals; while other principles, of an opposite tendency, have an habitual

place in the heart. That was the case with the stony-ground hearers,—Matt. xiii. 20. “They heard the word, received it with joy, yet endured only for a time.” And so we find the Lord taking up a complaint against Israel of old, in this language: “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away,”—Hos. vi. 4.

In fine, it is manifest that regeneration, or the new birth, does not consist in those things which the ignorance of some, the pride of others, and the pharisaical zeal of not a few, would substitute in its stead. Baptism, for instance, is not Regeneration: it is only the outward sign of it. The thing signified in Baptism, is “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;” but then this change is not produced by immersion—the latter is only an *emblem* of it. Many persons suppose that they become regenerated by changing their religious profession, which is another awful mistake. A Heathen or a Mahometan may turn Greek—the Greek may turn Catholic—the Catholic may turn Protestant,—without ever becoming a Christian! Besides, when we take a survey of what is called Christendom, we find it sub-divided into endless sects and parties; and a man may pace the whole round of these, and yet not be a Christian in the scriptural sense of that term: he may change from Catholic to Protestant, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Arminian, Episcopalian, Dissenter, Independent, Baptist, Quaker, &c. without becoming a Christian under any of those changes. To turn to a party and to turn to God are quite different things, and should never be confounded. To regenerate a sinner, create him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, turn him from the error of his way, from darkness unto light, and the power of Satan unto God, requires a power no less omnipotent, than that which called the universe into existence. But all this is effected by means of the word of truth, through the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the understanding,

subduing the will, and regulating the affections. Psalm xix. 7, and cxix. 130; 2 Cor. iii. 18, and chap. iv. 4, 6.

Let us collect now into one point of view the different properties of that change which takes place in the heart, and mind, and conduct of a sinner, when he is regenerated, or born again of the word and Spirit of God, and say whether such effects are likely to be produced by the simple act of immersion? The change produced by *scriptural* regeneration is always great—universal—internal—predominant—and habitual. The act of immersion may exhibit “the form,” but it never can produce “the power of godliness,” or instil those principles which issue in the “new man.” To effect this, requires a power equal to that which created the world; and so in my text, and, indeed, in all the Scriptures, it is ascribed to “God—the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift.” Do not err, then, my beloved brethren; and let no man deceive you with vain words. Baptismal regeneration is not the regeneration of the New Testament! To suppose so, is an awful delusion, and *wo to those who fall into it.*

#### IV. I close with a few words of IMPROVEMENT.

1. What an affecting view does this subject give us of the state of the world at large, in consequence of the entrance and prevalence of sin. Man was created, at first, in the image of his Maker, and formed to display his glory; but how has he fulfilled the end of his creation? Ere two thousand years had passed away from the beginning of time, it is said, “the Lord looked down from heaven, to survey the works of his hand, and, lo! all flesh had corrupted its way before him. The imagination of man’s heart was evil, only evil, and that continually;” and as the just recompense of their evil doings, he who made the world, destroyed it by a flood. Look now at the state of things from the re-peopling of it by the family of Noah, to the

birth of Christ; and what do we find to have been its actual state? Except in the small province of Judea, idolatry, superstition, and immorality, universally prevailed. The Greeks and Romans had, it is true, civilized the world with their literature, science, and the arts of life; but what was its condition in reference to religion and morals—the knowledge of the true God,—his worship and service,—and the duties which men owe to him, and to one another? In these respects “darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people,”—Isa. lx. 1. Not liking to retain in their minds the knowledge of the divine character, which was conveyed to them in the works of Creation and Providence, “they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened—professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and even to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things—worshipping and serving the creatures rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever,”—Rom. i. 21, &c. Such was the sad state of things in the apostle’s days, among the Gentiles who knew not God; and such it still remains in our day, over a large proportion of the habitable globe! Look to the immense regions of Africa, with its sable tribes. Look to Asia, with its numerous kingdoms, such as Turkey, Persia, Tartary, and the immense empire of China, &c. Millions upon millions of our fellow mortals are either deluded with Mahometan impostures, or Pagan superstitions, or Papal delusions, and all, or nearly all, are “without hope and without God,” sitting in darkness, and the region and shadow of death, enslaved to vice and sensuality, and led captive by the devil at his will.

2. From this subject let us be reminded of the vast importance of the Gospel—the ministry of the Gospel,—and the planting of Christian churches.

Is there anything of the true fear of God in this world?—is there a seed to serve him, and a generation to

call him blessed? We owe it not to philosophy, but to the Gospel, which, when faithfully preached, is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe. The world by all its wisdom knew not God; nor is there a spark of real religion, nor any acceptable worship of the true God in the earth, but what is produced by means of the Holy Scriptures, the word of the truth of the Gospel, communicating the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST, and of HIM CRUCIFIED. This, by the Holy Spirit's aid, is the means of regeneration—the word of truth, whereby the blessed God *of his own will* begets men to the faith, and so forms a people for his praise. These are the heirs of salvation—the persons who were *given* to the Saviour to be redeemed by his blood—the sheep for whom he laid down his life—and who are made, by divine teaching, to hear his voice and follow him; a people called by the Gospel “out of darkness into his marvellous light—a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to shew forth his high praises.” They are, therefore, not their own, but bought with a price, “first fruits to God and the Lamb,” and so laid under the strongest obligations “to glorify God with their bodies and spirits which are His.”

3. The subject we have had under consideration, may teach us the vast importance of the doctrine of divine influence, in the matter of regeneration, or the conversion of a sinner to God. A denial of this doctrine is always connected with a denial of the scripture account of the corruption and depravity of human nature; while the latter sets aside, or wholly supersedes, the necessity of prayer, and particularly of prayer for the Holy Spirit, to enlighten the judgment and sanctify the heart. In a word, it leads by necessary consequence, to a total subversion of the doctrine of salvation by grace—sovereign grace anticipating the will of man, according to—Rom. ix. 15, 16, and x. 20, 21. That faith which credits the Gospel, and is the root or principle of every holy disposition, is expressly said



to be the gift of God, and not acquired by ourselves,—Eph. ii. 8. It is *given us* in the behalf of Christ, to believe on him,—Phil. i. 29. When Peter confessed his faith, Christ thus addressed him: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven,”—Matt. xvi. 17. And do we not find Jesus thanking his Father for the display of his sovereignty, in making these things known to some, in distinction from others, who were equally favoured with the outward means? or because he had “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes?”—Matt. xi. 25. Agreeably to this, he tells the Jews, who heard and rejected his doctrine: “No man can come to me,” that is, believe on me, “except the Father who hath sent me draw him,”—and this drawing, he explains to be, divine teaching, according to the promise of the New Covenant:—“they shall be all taught of God,”—John vi. 44, 45. From these passages, it is plain, that the Spirit of God is the *efficient cause* of regeneration, though he makes use of the word of truth, as the instrumental means of effecting it; and that there is a divine teaching, in begetting men to the faith, which is not vouchsafed to all who hear the Gospel. I know it is pleaded by those against whom I am now contending, that the Holy Spirit is only conferred upon men, *after* they believe; but that his agency is not necessary, to *make* them believers. This, however, is contrary to all the texts above adduced; and, moreover, it is wholly unsuitable to the exigency of the case; for, humanly speaking, it requires a greater exertion of power to convert a sinner and create him anew, than to make him grow in grace, after that change has taken place upon him. In a word, it is only by contending for the necessity of the Holy Spirit’s agency, in the work of regeneration, that we can hold fast the form of sound words, the faith first delivered unto the saints, and maintain the honours of divine grace, in the salvation of guilty, apostate beings; while, on the other hand, if we

resign or relax this doctrinal point, we do it at the expence of every thing that is discriminating and valuable in the Christian system.

To conclude:—from the subject we have been considering, let those who through grace have believed, be reminded of the obligations under which they are laid, to make the glory of God, and the happiness of their fellow creatures, the great leading scope and design of all their words and actions. Has it been given you, in the behalf of Christ, to believe in his name—to be made happy in the favour of God—to be begotten again to the lively hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Never lose sight of the fact, that all this is of *pure grace*, free unmerited favour, shewn to the worthless and the miserable, the destitute and undone. If you are *in Christ*, united to him by faith, so as to be interested in the blessings of his mediation, and the fruits of his redemption, it is *not of yourselves*—for “we are saved by *grace*, through *faith*, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God;”—for “of his merey he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ.” Let us then be induced, by the mercies of God, to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, being our reasonable service. Let us not walk as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; but let the time past of our lives more than suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and henceforth, let us cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. It is only thus we can concur with the designs of eternal mercy, in calling us out of our natural darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel of Christ; and thus only can we shew the sincerity of our love for Him, who died for us while yet enemies, and whom we never *could* have owned as Lord, “*but by the Holy Spirit;*” (1 Cor. xii. 3.) as the apostle Paul distinctly testifies.

## APPENDIX TO SERMON XXX.

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HAVING, towards the close of the preceding Sermon, made a slight allusion to some of the tenets of a contemporary author, viz. Mr. Alexander Campbell, of Bethany, Brooke county, in the State of Virginia, U. S., I have thought it might not be altogether without its use, but, indeed, in some measure, necessary, to add further particulars, in this place, concerning that distinguished individual, and his writings, so far as they have hitherto come under my inspection; it being manifest, that these things could not, with any propriety, have been introduced into a Sermon.

In a monthly publication, which I edited during a part of the years 1835 and 1836, under the title of the "MILLENNIAL HARBINGER," and which extended to two volumes, 12mo., I laid before the public a short account of my first acquaintance with that gentleman, accompanied with some details of his personal history, copies of a correspondence which had passed between him and myself, together with copious extracts from his writings, which are now become voluminous. To those who have perused the pages of the work just referred to, it can be no secret, that my sentiments, on some doctrinal points, differ from those of Mr. Campbell, as I then understood him; and it was a material object with me, both in commencing and continuing the correspondence, to elicit further information, and come to a better understanding of the doctrinal sentiments maintained by him and his friends, as well as of the general principles on which they proceed in contending for a Reformation of the Christian Church in that extensive region, in which they are said to have succeeded to an astonishing degree.

Mr. Campbell was known to have obtained considerable celebrity, by several public disputations which he had held, during a course of years; two of them on the subject of Baptism, with ministers of the Presbyterian denomination (I believe)—and a third, with Robert Dale Owen, Esq., formerly of New Lanark, in Scotland, an avowed infidel, on the Evidences of Christianity,—a Debate held at the city of Cincinnati, State of Ohio, and which lasted from the 13th to the 21st of April, 1829. On these occasions, and more especially the last of them, Mr. Campbell was considered to have evinced extraordinary talents, such as secured

him a well-earned popularity, and could not fail to gain attention to the various productions of his prolific pen. To which let me add, that the extracts which were produced from month to month, in the *London Millennial Harbinger*, and which comprise some of the very choicest of his writings, could scarcely fail to whet the appetite of his readers on this side the Atlantic, and make them anxious for a more general acquaintance with them.

Mr. Campbell has now been before the public as an author, but chiefly as the Editor of a monthly publication, or religious magazine, for about fifteen years. His first work, entitled the "Christian Baptist," commenced in 1823, and having run a successful career of seven years, comprising a volume a year, came to its termination at the end of 1829. This work, after going through two or three editions, in its original form, viz. seven volumes 12mo., and having undergone a careful revision by its able editor, was once more issued from the press, in a greatly improved form, the entire seven volumes, with the omission of a few trifling and unimportant articles, being cast into one large volume of the size of royal octavo, in double columns, and *stereotyped*.

Of this work, though I differ from its able conductor in several things, as already mentioned, I have no hesitation in offering it as my opinion, that it comprises much that is deserving of the serious attention of the people of this part of the world; and viewing it in that light, I imported, in the course of last year, about twenty-five copies for the gratification of a few friends, none of whom were, I believe, disappointed with the book.

In the year 1830, Mr. Campbell commenced a new periodical, of a more elaborate cast, under the title of the "Millennial Harbinger," printed in octavo, and of which also seven volumes are now before the public. Of this production, however, I am compelled to speak in far more qualified terms than I have done of his "Christian Baptist." I would not, indeed, be understood as denying, that Mr. C. is still in the Harbinger, the same uncompromising advocate of Reform, as he was in the Christian Baptist; but, then, many of the topics which occupied his pen in this last-mentioned work, were exhausted in it; and such of them as have, from time to time, been introduced into the new work, have lost their raciness—they want the grace of novelty: the reader is apt to say, "we have had this before, again and again—it palls upon the appetite." But this is not all.

While engaged in publishing the *Christian Baptist*, Mr.

Campbell presented himself to us in a different attitude from what he does in the Harbinger. In the former, we view him in the light of an enquirer after truth. He looks around him, and surveying the professing world, he finds it a mass of corruption—a sink of iniquity. Even among the strictest sect of professors, “their fear of God is taught by the precepts of men,”—and he forms the noble resolution of essaying a Reformation. He adopts from the “living oracles,” a few first principles, and endeavours to carry them out to their legitimate consequences. But he advances with slow and cautious step—ever and anon looking back to the principles from which he set out, and rarely dogmatizing. He is ready to receive light from whatever quarter it may spring up and shine upon his path. In proof of this, I might adduce his correspondence with Messrs. Semple and Broaddus, two able ministers of the Baptist denomination, residing in his vicinity, and whose letters will be found in *my* Millennial Harbinger. But in the publication which succeeded to the Christian Baptist, Mr. Campbell is no longer the enquirer after truth; he has changed that character for the bold dogmatist—the champion of a party; he is surrounded by a host of writers, who pour in their lucubrations upon him in endless profusion; and instead of calling into exercise a discriminating judgment, and selecting such papers as are calculated to advance the cause of truth, he throws open the columns of his Journal to all kinds of trash, till the whole is little better than a chaotic mass, with which the Editor himself is evidently bewildered. And glad should I be, did the evil extend no further than this; but a careful examination of his later productions excites my deep alarm, that he is, himself, subverted from the faith of the Gospel! I am well aware of the surprise, and, perhaps, indignation, which this avowal will excite in the breasts of some, whom I formerly numbered among my friends; but, having expressed my apprehensions, I consider myself imperiously called upon to state the grounds on which they are founded.

As the limits of an “Appendix” will not allow me to go at full length into the subject, and that I may also abridge my labour, I shall, for the present, confine myself to three points, on each of which I consider Mr. Campbell as having departed from “the form of sound words”—“the faith once delivered to the saints.” These are, 1st,—the corruption of human nature, or the innate natural depravity of mankind. 2.—The necessity of divine influence to give the Gospel its saving effect in regeneration and

sanctification. And 3.—His maintaining the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, and the *actual* washing away of sin by immersion.

Now as respects the first of these points, namely, “the total depravity” of mankind, in consequence of the corruption of human nature, through the fall of our fœderal head, I am free to confess, that, if anything contrary to the *received* doctrine, on that subject, is to be found in the “Christian Baptist,” it has eluded my vigilance, and I think I have searched with some care. I admit, indeed, that we no where find Mr. Campbell stating the doctrine with the clearness, perspicuity, and power, that is done in the writings of the prophets and apostles, in the passages referred to in my last two Sermons. Nevertheless, I have not found him any where in that work entering his protest against it; and my opinion is, that *at that time*, he had no intention of impugning it. The first violent attack that I find made upon it in his publications, may be seen in the “Millennial Harbinger,” vol. ii. for the year 1831, in which are three essays, signed “MOSES,” which are respectively entitled, “Total Depravity and Metaphysical Regeneration.” In these papers we are told, that the phrase “*total depravity*” was christened by Austin, baptized by Calvin, and immersed by Doctors Gill and Fuller,—p. 361. We are further informed, that “this doctrine is the HONEY of a poisoned cup, and the sting of a serpent’s embrace.” And, as though this were not enough, it is further added, that “such heresy as this is worse than all the pride, avarice, ambition, and lewdness, and all the other crimes, which are committed in the land of orthodoxy. It is more deadly than the fangs and stings of the aspick,”—p. 363.

Now, the reader will naturally expect, that a writer who would not scruple to use language like this, as to a doctrine that has been currently received among Christians, according to his own confession, for fourteen or fifteen hundred years, would, as a matter of course, furnish us with a satisfactory explanation of those direct testimonies, both of prophets and apostles, which *appear* to us to inculcate the doctrine of “human depravity,” such as, Gen. vi. 5, and viii. 21; Psalm xiv, and li. 5; Rom. iii. *passim*; Eph. ii. 1—3; with many others; but we look in vain for anything of that kind. The only thing attempted, is to cull a few texts from the Old Testament, not one of which does he understand or rightly apply, seeing that they all refer to the Sinai Covenant, and its temporal blessings; though adduced by the writer to prove the liberty of

the human will, and that man has the power and ability to repent and turn to God without divine aid!

I am aware, however, that it will be objected to me, that the Editor of a periodical cannot justly be held accountable for every sentiment that may be contained in the writings of those who contribute to his journal; and that unless it can be proved that the person who signs himself "Moses," is Alexander Campbell, my complaints go for nothing.

Now this I freely admit,—that I do not believe Mr. Campbell was the writer of those three papers. I believe they were written by his friend Walter Scott, of Carthage, in the State of Ohio; and I shall produce my reasons for thinking so.

I have now lying before me, a publication of which that gentleman is the Editor, entitled, "The Evangelist," and in vol. iii. p. 151, I find a DIALOGUE, relating to this same subject, from which I shall produce a short extract.

"JONATHAN.—Sir, it would gratify your humble servant not a little, to know precisely what are your views of human depravity, and the relation of that doctrine to the Gospel, as preached for the remission of sins.

EDITOR.—My dear Jonathan, I am happy it is permitted, nay, even enjoined us by our holy religion, to study to please, and to edify each other in the great matters of faith and hope. The doctrine about which you enquire, however, comes not within the purview of either faith or hope, and cannot, therefore, form a legitimate topic of Christian conversation. In fact, it has no foundation either in nature or religion, so far as I am a judge; for neither the phrase, nor even the words which form the phrase, are once found in the Holy Scriptures; and, in short, I know nothing about it.

JONATHAN.—Brother Scott, you surprise me; are you a preacher of the Gospel, and know nothing of human depravity? And is it possible, that neither the phrase, nor the words that compose the phrase, are found in the whole field of the divine vocabulary? I must have mistaken the phrase: I have mistaken it. I meant total depravity: Yes, it was total depravity, I meant.

EDITOR.—My dear Jonathan, pardon me; but I know nothing about depravity, human, or total: the word *total* is as perfectly an exotic in the field of Christian theology, as the word human, or even depravity itself. None of all of them is a Bible word; and therefore their use is very questionable; at all events, I know

nothing about the doctrine, and it is most certain, "I care nothing about it."

This, I think it will be allowed on all hands, is pretty pointed and explicit! But, had the same question been put to the apostle Paul, does the reader think that he would have returned the same answer? Nay, verily; we may easily judge what answer he would have returned, by a reference to Rom. iii. and Eph. ii; and if Mr. Walter Scott, neither knows, nor cares, anything about "human depravity," he is a very unfit man to preach the Gospel; at any rate *his* Gospel cannot be the identical,—original Gospel, the

"Sovereign balm for every wound,  
And cordial for our fears,"

which the first heralds of salvation proclaimed: for in their message of peace and reconciliation, the doctrine of "human depravity"—total depravity, and the Gospel of divine grace, answered to each other, as disease and remedy, Yet this same Walter Scott is one of the persons in whom Mr. Campbell glories as being so able a coadjutor in the work of Reform! If the reader will take the trouble to turn to *my* "Millennial Harbinger," vol. i. p. 342, he will find the following lines as a part of one of his letters to me.

"Brother Jones, tell Scotland that one of her sons, Walter Scott, of Edinburgh, has been my associate for more than twelve years, and now edits the 'Evangelist,' in Carthage, Ohio. He came to America a Presbyterian, was immersed by one of the Haldanean School, and was the first of our Evangelists to re-publish, *vivâ voce*, with effect, the Jerusalem Gospel, in the forests of Ohio, reclaimed from the Indians."

But I proceed to another article of Campbellism. In one of his letters to me, written during the last year, Mr. Campbell remarks, that there is no one doctrine of the Gospel that has given rise to more controversy, or been the source of more litigation among them, in the United States, than that of the "influences of the Holy Spirit." (See *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. i. p. 328.) I was no way surprised at this; I should, indeed, have been greatly surprised, had the case been otherwise. He might, with great justice, have taken up, or ended the complaint with, "*quorum pars magna fui*;" for though he has written elaborately on the subject—what has he done? He has continually been philosophising on an ar-



ticle of pure revelation—saying and unsaying—until he has come, at last, to deny the doctrine altogether, in its most essential points, namely, its absolute necessity to give effect to the written word, causing it to enter the mind of a sinner, enlighten his understanding, make its way to the conscience and the heart, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. In fact, his conduct, as relates to the point in hand, exhibits a melancholy instance of human versatility, and I say it with unfeigned regret; but having made the charge, I feel bound in honour to substantiate it.

If the reader will take the trouble to look into my “Millennial Harbinger,” vol. i. p. 136, he will find a letter from me to Mr. Campbell, which has a particular bearing on this subject. I there mention having read a series of essays, nine in number, which appeared in the “Christian Baptist,” on “the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of men,” which papers I had perused with considerable satisfaction, but which, nevertheless, I thought left the main point untouched, as in none of them did the writer insist upon the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit’s agency to give the Gospel its saving effect. The letter also mentioned two other essays on the same subject, signed PAULINUS, who, as Mr. Campbell subsequently informed me, was a Mr. Andrew Broaddus, a very respectable Baptist Minister in his neighbourhood, who had read Mr. Campbell’s nine essays with similar impressions as myself, that is, *with equal disappointment*, and which two essays were intended to supply Mr. Campbell’s deficiencies. These two valuable essays will be found in my “Millennial Harbinger,” vol. i. p. 130, and 169. Now, I beseech the reader to remark the recorded judgment of Mr. Campbell on these two essays. I quote his own words:—

“The readers of the Christian Baptist, are, and no doubt will feel themselves, indebted to Paulinus for the very forcible and elegant Essays he has furnished on this subject. He has, unquestionably, thought very closely, examined the Scriptures very fully, and has arranged and exhibited the testimonies in so methodical and forcible a manner, as to give the greatest and best possible effect to his sentiments on this theme. Few of the intelligent readers of this work will dissent from his conclusion of the whole matter, viz. ‘The substance of the leading sentiment maintained in these two Essays, is that we are dependent on the influence of the Holy Spirit to render the word effectual to our conversion and final salvation.’” “Let no man say that in explicitly opposing [the common notion of physical operations], we argue that men are converted without the Holy Spirit. By no means. The Spirit of God works upon the human mind, as well as dwells in it. It dwells in the record which God has given of his Son, as the spirit dwells in the body of a man; clothed with this record, it enlightens, convinces, and converts men. *They are enabled to believe by the Holy Spirit, and without his aid, no man ever could have believed in Jesus, as God’s own Son.*”

Now, I beseech the reader once more to ponder well the amount of concession comprised in this extract, and I ask him, is it less or more than this? "My nine Essays were defective—*Paulinus* has done well in supplying that deficiency in his two very forcible and elegant Essays. We *are* dependant on the influence of the Holy Spirit to render the word effectual to our conversion and final salvation—the Spirit of God *works upon the human mind*, as well as dwells in it—men *are enabled to believe* by the Holy Spirit, and *without his aid*, no man ever could have believed in Jesus, as God's own Son."

Such was Mr. Campbell's decided judgment, when he published the fifth volume of the *Christian Baptist*, A. D. 1827. We shall now enquire—what are his present opinions on the same subject. In the year 1835, he gave to the world a volume of 400 pages, entitled "*Christianity Restored*," professedly comprising the marrow of all his writings on Theological subjects; it is his *chef d'œuvre*, according to his own account of the matter; its object being, as he tells us in the title page, "to RESTORE the original Gospel and Order of things." Well, on p. 280, we have a pretty long note, in which he favors us with an extract from a contemporary Journal, and it is thus introduced to our notice:—

"August 1st.—I have just now opened the *Cincinnati Baptist Journal* of 26th July, from which I read an approved definition of regeneration. It is orthodox, spiritual, physical, mystical, and metaphysical Regeneration. It is quoted from the "STANDARD." Regeneration, in the *Evangelical Standard*, is thus defined:—

"Is the sinner active in regeneration? Certainly he is. His mind is a thinking, rational principle, which never ceases to act; and, therefore, when the word *passive* is applied to it, by Old Divines, or by Calvinists, they do not mean that it is *literally* dead, like inert matter, which requires a physical impulse to put it in motion. They only mean to convey the scriptural idea, that the Holy Spirit is the *sole* agent in regeneration, and that the sinner has no more *efficient agency* in accomplishing it, than Lazarus had in becoming alive from the dead. Still they grant that his mind is most active, but unhappily its activity is all *against* the Divine influence: as the Scriptures assure us, unregenerated persons 'do always resist' the strivings of the Spirit. '*Every* imagination of the thoughts of man's heart, is *only* evil continually.' 'There is none that doeth good, no, *not one.*' The sinner, therefore, instead of voluntarily co-operating with the Holy Spirit, does all he can to *resist* his divine influence, and *prevent* his own regeneration, until he is *made* willing by almighty power."

Such is the text:—now for Mr. Campbell's comment.

"What a comfortable thing is this theory of regeneration! The sinner is to be regenerated when actively striving against the Divine influence. At the moment of regeneration, "he has," in one sense, "no more efficient agency in accomplishing it, than Lazarus had in becoming alive from the dead;" and in another sense, he is not passive, but, "does all he can to *resist* the Divine influence, and *prevent* his own regeneration, until he is *made* willing by almighty power." This is *standard* divinity; and he that preaches this divinity, is a

pious, regenerated, Regular Orthodox Baptist Christian Minister! Of how much value, on this theory, is all the preaching in Christendom? The Holy Spirit may be busily at work upon some drunken sot, or some vile debauchee, who is as dead as Lazarus on one side, and on the other, resisting the Spirit, with all his moral and physical energy, up to the moment that the Almighty arm pierces him to the heart with a sword, and makes him alive by killing him!!!

“The absurdity and licentiousness of such a view of the great work of renovation, we had thought so glaring, that no editor in the West would have had boldness to have published it. This is a proof of the necessity of our present essay, and will explain to the intelligent reader, why we have given to the whole process of renovation, the name of regeneration, which properly belongs to the last act,” p. 280.

Who, now, that reads this, can help being shocked at the profaneness which it evinces? But such is the manner in which the operations of the Holy Spirit are *caricatured*, in a book which is “to restore *the original Gospel and order of things!*” Let us only expunge the terms, “drunken sot,” and “vile debauchee,” and substitute in their stead—“the Philippian jailor,” ready to commit suicide,—or the name of Saul of Tarsus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints, when on his way to Damascus,—or the murderers of the Lord of life and glory, on the day of Pentecost,—and I would beg leave to ask Mr. Campbell, where is “the absurdity,” or the “licentiousness,” of such a view of the great work of renovation to be found, as then took place in all the instances referred to? The cases to which I have adverted, are *real* ones, not fictitious, like those supposed by Mr. Campbell; they actually took place, and they remain upon record, to illustrate that very doctrine, which Mr. Campbell deprecates and abhors—namely, the sovereignty of divine grace, preceding the will of man.

The difference between the actual state of the persons supposed by Mr. C. and those which I have proposed to substitute, is one of quality or complexion only, and not of moral turpitude. The atrocity, for aught I know, may be greater in the case of the persons to whom I have referred, than in the other; yet we see that they were “pierced to the heart by the sword of the Holy Spirit, and were made alive by killing them!!!” We cannot reasonably doubt that multitudes of unconverted Jews, who were spectators of what took place at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost. when three thousand of their countrymen were pricked to the heart, and cried out, in the anguish of their souls,—“Men and brethren, what shall we do,”—regarded the whole as a religious juggle—a trick—a piece of fanaticism—and laughed at the “absurdity,” and “licentiousness” of the thing;—pray, is Mr. Campbell prepared to concur with them? or *are those, in this country, who have recently*

*adopted his creed?* For myself, when I seriously review these things, I cannot help asking the question—"WHAT NEXT?"

The reader has now a *sample* of Mr. Campbell's consistency; but to do anything like common justice to the subject, would require a pamphlet of no ordinary size. Any one who "thirsts for more," has only to look into Mr. C.'s writings and compare the "Christian Baptist" with the "Millennial Harbinger" and his "Christianity Restored," and he may drink "full draughts." I have already produced, in the pages of my "Millennial Harbinger," letters from various correspondents, addressed to him in his editorial capacity, charging him with denying the operation, or agency, of the Holy Spirit, in the work of regeneration, all which he flatly and peremptorily denies. See, *London Millennial Harbinger*, vol. ii. p. 11, 353, &c. "Did you ever read anything I have written," asks Mr. Campbell, "denying the operation or agency of the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of sinners? No; you did not. Neither have I written anything to that effect." In this way, he would, all along, have his readers to think, that he is a sound believer in the doctrine of divine influence. But what does it all amount to? According to his theory, the written word is *the* SPIRIT, and "besides what is written in the book, (or Bible) there *can be* no new light communicated to the mind; for all the converting power of the Holy Spirit is exhibited in the divine word." See *his* *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. ii. p. 396. And so delighted is he with this same Aphorism, that we have it repeated in his latest production, viz. his "Christianity Restored," p. 361. His meaning in all this was well enough understood by *some* of his readers; and accordingly, a correspondent from England, writes to him, under date of the 25th of March, 1836, in the following terms:—

"Greatly esteemed Sir!

I addressed a letter to you about four months ago, to express the gladness with which I, and the friends connected with me, learned that you, and a large company in America, were of the same mind and judgment with us, in following the faith and obedience of the first churches of Christ, without regard to more recent inventions. As regards, what is termed, "the work of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration," or, more definitely, "the necessity of Divine influence to give the word of God its proper effect in the conversion of a sinner," every sect here, however differing in other respects, holds this to be a "fundamental doctrine." For our-

selves, I beg to say we are content to regard the apostles' word, as the speaking of the Holy Spirit through them unto sinners." And then the writer proceeds, throughout the remainder of the letter, to explain away the plain import and meaning of the apostle's words, 1 Cor. iii. 6—"I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase.*" And this he does by an ingenious device, which consists in affirming, that it does not seem correct to say, "Paul *planted the seed*: the sower indeed sows the seed, but the planter plants the plants. Also, that it appears to him, bordering on absurdity, to say, Paul sowed the word, and Apollos watered with the same word; it being unusual to water sown barley with barley." But enough of this.

Now, supposing that Mr. Campbell stood firm in the belief of the necessity of divine influence to give effect to the Gospel, what might we reasonably expect would be his answer to this correspondent, who claims affinity to him on the ground of their being of the same mind and judgment? Would he not have said—"My friend, you have mistaken me on the point in question. I contend for the necessity of divine influence to give the word effect. I cannot, therefore, acknowledge the relationship." But does he do anything of the kind? Nay, verily: on the contrary, the letter is introduced to the readers of his *Millennial Harbinger*, with these words:—"The following extract from a letter of an *esteemed correspondent*, upon an important subject, will, no doubt, be interesting to the readers of the *Harbinger*:" and the title given to it is, "DIVINE INFLUENCE IN CONVERSION;" but, surely, its more appropriate title would have been, "Conversion *without* Divine Influence!"

When I commenced the publication of my *Millennial Harbinger*, I was aware that Mr. Campbell was understood by some to deny the necessity of divine influence, and I therefore determined, if it were possible, to ascertain the truth of this. Accordingly, I addressed him on the point, in a letter which will be found in my *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. i. p. 174—180, in which I endeavoured to shew the importance of this doctrine, and to discriminate between divine teaching, and that which is merely human; and I now entreat the particular attention of all, who would enter into the merits of this question, to that letter; as their doing so, will relieve me from the necessity of enlarging upon the subject in this place. I cannot help entertaining a surmise or suspicion, that Mr. Campbell declined laying that letter before the readers of his *Harbinger*; and I found it on this fact: that though I have

repeatedly applied, *both to himself and others*, I have never been able to procure a complete copy of his Harbinger for 1835, in which my letter *ought to have appeared!* I wish I may be mistaken in my fears on this head.

Now, as to the subject of "Baptismal Regeneration,"—to which I have already alluded in the foregoing Sermon—it is needless to dwell at any length on this. It seems to follow, almost by necessary consequence, from a denial of the doctrines of human depravity, and the necessity of Divine influence to give the Gospel effect, in the conversion of a sinner to God. The reader will find, that I have entered pretty largely into an examination of these doctrines in several of the Sermons contained in this volume; particularly, in Sermons vi. vii. viii. xii. xiii. xix. xx. and xxi.; and it is needless to repeat here what is there said. I will, however, trespass on the reader's patience with one remark, and I beg attention to it. Mr. Campbell was totally silent about Baptismal Regeneration, while publishing the volumes of the "Christian Baptist." The reader will look in vain for that doctrine in all its pages. In several of the volumes of his Millennial Harbinger, also, the thing is kept out of sight, though we have now and then occasional hints of it. But in the volume entitled, "Christianity Restored," the whole matter is developed! We are there assured, that "all the apostolical Fathers, as they are called; all the pupils of the apostles, and all the ecclesiastical writers of note, of the first four Christian centuries, whose writings have come down to us, allude to, and speak of, Christian Immersion, as the "Regeneration," and "remission of sins," spoken of in the New Testament, p. 223. Here, then, we have a full development of that which had hitherto been only glanced at. And now, as though apprehensive that this disclosure might occasion some alarm, for the moment, Mr. Campbell anticipates the consequences, and thus skilfully wards off the blow:—but the reader shall have it in his own words: "If any ask, why this matter," namely, the perfect identity of "Immersion" and "Regeneration," was not fully developed in our first essays on this subject; our answer is, because we could not anticipate, that our opponents would have so represented, or misrepresented, our views. Were a general asked, why he did not arrange all his troops in the beginning of the action, as he had them arranged when he triumphed over his enemy, he would reply, that the manœuvres and assaults of the enemy, directed the disposition of his forces,

—“*Christianity Restored*,” p. 279, *note*. So much, then, for Mr. Campbell’s generalship! But while I give him full credit for his dexterity and adroitness, I am of opinion, that he would have found a more substantial apology in 2 Cor. xii. 16, *latter clause of the verse*. To me it is a most irksome and ungracious task to offer these strictures on the writings of one, whom I was once gratified in calling my friend; but they are extorted from me by the indiscretion of certain persons in this country, who have much too hastily adopted Mr. C.’s opinions as the standard of their creed, and are now industriously propagating them, to the unsettling of churches, and it is greatly to be feared, to the subverting of many individuals from the faith of the Gospel; and this must plead my excuse for still detaining the reader on so unpleasant a subject: “*Amicus Socrates, Amicus Plato, sed magis Amica Veritas.*”

I have often admired the remark of the learned WIRSIUS, in his work on “*The Economy of the Covenants*,” when treating on the subject of Justification, Book iii. chap. viii; and it is worthy of the reader’s attention. “*The doctrine of Justification*,” says he, “diffuses itself through the whole body of divinity; and according as the foundation is either solidly established, or superficially touched, so the whole superstructure either rises graceful and majestic, beyond the power of assault, or threatens an opprobrious fall.” The learned professor then goes on to speak of the high importance that was attached to this article of the Christian faith by the WALDENSES, in the middle ages. “*The pious Picardians*,” says he, “as they were called in Bohemia and Moravia, (the country of John Huss and Jerome of Prague,) valued this article at its true price, when in their Confession of Faith, Art. vii. speaking of Justification, they thus write:—this sixth Article is accounted with us the most important of all, as being the sum of all Christianity and piety. Wherefore, our divines teach and handle it with the utmost diligence and application, endeavouring to instil it into all.” And in this they acted wisely. LUTHER, the great Reformer, pronounced it “*Articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*,”—that article of the Christian faith by which the church stands or falls,—and declared that it “REIGNED IN HIS HEART.” This doctrine, as Dr. Robertson well observes, in his Introduction to the History of the reign of Charles the Fifth, was the lever with which Luther effected the Reformation from Popery; and I do not hesitate to affirm, that it is the pivot on which all scriptural Christianity turns. With these views of the paramount import-

ance of the subject, I have searched the writings of Mr. Campbell with no little anxiety, to ascertain, if possible, what are his views of this subject; but great has been my disappointment. The most particular account of the matter that I have met with, is in the last of his works, viz. his “Christianity Restored;” and, therefore, it may be considered as presenting us with his most matured thoughts. As such, I shall here extract them.

“JUSTIFICATION ASCRIBED TO SEVEN CAUSES.”

“In examining the New Testament, we find, that a man is said to be ‘justified by faith,’—Rom. v. 1; Gal. ii. 16, and iii. 24. ‘Justified freely by his grace,’—Rom. iii. 24; Titus iii. 7. ‘Justified by his blood,’—Rom. v. 9. ‘Justified by works,’—James ii. 21, 24, 25. ‘Justified in, or by, the name of the Lord Jesus,’—1 Cor. vi. 11. ‘Justified by Christ,’—Gal. ii. 16. ‘Justified by knowledge,’—Isa. liii. 11. It is God that justifies by these seven means—by Christ, his name, his blood; by knowledge, grace, faith, and by works.”

Now, reader, what think you of this, as coming from a “Master in Israel,”—one who has been diligently studying his Bible for more than twenty years, and now sets up for a Restorer of genuine Christianity—“the Original Gospel, and Order of things?” Can the ingenuity of man devise anything more calculated to perplex, confuse, and distress the mind of an inquirer after truth, than the extract just made? The subject relates to the way of a sinner’s *acceptance with God*; than which anything more deeply interesting to all the human race cannot be conceived—“How shall sinful man be just with God—have his sins forgiven, and stand accepted in his sight?” Let such a one have recourse to Mr. Campbell’s “Christianity Restored,” for a satisfactory solution; and what does he learn from it? He finds he has seven points to adjust, before he can arrive at any certainty about the matter. He is justified *by faith*, and he is also justified *by works*—he is justified *by grace*, and he is justified *by blood*—he is justified *by Christ*, and he is justified *by knowledge*! And the more he endeavours to reconcile these various claims upon him, the more he is bewildered and confounded! Such is the teaching of the spirit of error, so much condemned in Scripture. And even philosophers tell us, that to embarrass, perplex, entangle, and confound, are the inseparable characteristics of error, while truth is one and indivisible, simple, and ever consistent with itself, like the laws of



nature. The apostle Paul tells us, that "God justifieth *the ungodly*"—and that *freely*, by his grace—*not working*, but believing—He is "the justifier of the ungodly." This is that expression, as Dr. Owen remarks, which hath stirred up so much wrath among many, and on account of which, some seem to be much displeased with the apostle himself. Yet, after all, this is the prerogative of God; as such, he will be believed on and worshipped, which adds weight and emphasis to the expression; nor must we forego this testimony of the Holy Spirit, let men be as angry as they please.

But it is high time that I put an end to these strictures. Mr. Campbell is a very clever man, and has displayed great talent in his writings; but he has yet to learn the doctrine of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, touching the justification of the ungodly by faith, without the deeds of the law; and until he learns *that*, and lays it as the foundation of the Christian system, whatever superstructure he may raise, will only be as "a bowing wall, or a tottering fence." He may make his boast, and glory in his hundred and fifty thousand followers; but he is only building "wood, hay, and stubble,"—which the fire shall destroy;—for "every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

Mr. Campbell takes no little credit to himself, for his emancipation from all human creeds and confessions; but while we cheerfully award him all the modicum of praise to which he is entitled on this score, it is very desirable, that he should propound to us *the true faith*, and give us an explicit statement of what he has himself gathered from a twenty years' study of the Scriptures. After all the volumes he has issued from the press, I frankly confess, that I find it a much easier task to say what he does *not* hold than what he does! For instance, he does *not* hold the doctrine of Original Sin, or the "total depravity" of mankind, in consequence of the fall of their fæderal head and representative. He does *not* hold the necessity of the operations of the Holy Spirit, in order to give the Gospel its saving effect in regeneration, or conversion. He does *not* hold that "ungodly sinners are justified freely by divine grace, *not working but believing.*" He does *not* hold the doctrine of the *Sovereignty* of divine grace, preceding or anticipating the will of man; on the contrary, he tells us that "all who resolve individual salvation into a mere act of Sovereignty, disarm the Gospel of all its powers, make its Author insincere, its promises and its arguments deceitful, an instrument of guile and double meanings, a parade of empty professions to save

appearances; and, worse than all, mock our miseries and tantalize our feelings.\* He, himself, probably, expects to be saved by some other grace than that which rescued the dying malefactor from sinking into the jaws of hell! He does *not* hold the Moral Law to be a rule of life to the people of the New Covenant, though Christ himself has, indisputably, adopted it himself as such,—Matt. v. 17, &c. I might thus go on in the same denying course, and we should find the catalogue of *negatives* sufficiently copious. But who shall furnish us with his catalogue of *credenda*—the articles of his creed? Does he believe in the Deity, and distinct personality, of the Holy Spirit? If so, why infuse doubts into the minds of his readers, by recommending, as he has done, in his *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. iii. p. 239, a treatise, in which both the distinct personality, and the worship of the Holy Spirit, are impugned, as both unscriptural and contrary to reason; and why has he had recourse to such laboured criticism, to set aside the plain meaning of Rom. viii. 26; and to shew the absurdity of believing, that the Holy Spirit helps the infirmities of the children of God, and maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered.† All this is highly *ominous*, to say the least of it. But Mr. Campbell is still *on the wing*, and, in the rapidity of his flight, who shall assure us, where he will alight and take his standing? He ridicules the practice of preaching from a single text; and to teach us the way more perfectly, he has set us a pattern for our imitation, in a new monthly periodical, called, “The Christian Preacher;” the first Sermon of which is one of his own production; and the glory of it consists in stringing together some six or eight passages of Scripture, as a motto, and following it up by a rambling rhapsody, *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis!* His “Christianity Restored,” which is to put the world in possession of “the Original Gospel and Order of things,” appears to me a very strange, and even whimsical performance. Who, for instance, would have expected in a book of such high pretensions, to meet with a system of Rhetoric—an explanation of tropes and figures, metaphors,

\* See his *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. i. p. 237. Who would expect such language as that now quoted from the pen of Alexander Campbell?

† See his *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. i. p. 111, where, also, at p. 217, we have a very satisfactory refutation of Mr. Campbell’s gloss, written by Mr. Andrew Broaddus.

beautiful, bold, and rude; allegory, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, hyperbole, catachresis, &c. &c. Why not include in it a system of Natural History, birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, &c.; also of Astronomy, in which he might have favored his readers with a learned Dissertation, on “the sweet influences of Pleiades, the bands of Orion, the orbit of Arcturus and his sons, and the coming forth of Mazzaroth in his season? His “Christianity Restored,” when compared with Archibald M’Lean’s Illustration of our Lord’s Commission to his Apostles, is as tinsel to sterling gold.

And what can we think of the bond of union recommended and adopted among the churches in Mr. Campbell’s connexion? When I look into the New Testament, I find the apostle Paul thus addressing one of the primitive churches: “Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment,”—1 Cor. i. 10. The grounds and reasonableness of this, it is not difficult to make out. The Holy Scriptures comprise a system of divine truth perfectly harmonious in all its parts; and this is the only standard of our faith and practice, nor can there be any visible Christianity but what corresponds with it. The apostolic churches recognized one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism, one hope of their calling, one God and Father of all,—one Holy Spirit, which actuated every member of the body, uniting them one to another, and all to Christ their living head. Is any thing of this kind aimed at, or pressed after, among Mr. Campbell and his friends? I find one of their leading men, both as an author and elder, denying the existence of the human soul, insisting that man is wholly *material*,—that he consists of body, breath, and blood, and that *the blood is the soul*; and that to contend that there is any distinct, intelligent principle in man, any thing which survives the dissolution of the body, is the sheerest nonsense imaginable; for that he, being a physician, has put the fact to a *chemical test*, and therefore can assure them, that the common opinion is a vulgar error! And this doctrine he is propagating by means of his “Apostolic Advocate,” through the length and breadth of the United States, out of which it has made its way into our own country. Yet, such is Mr. Campbell’s extensive charity, that this same man is his “dear brother,”—yea, and more, “he is a chosen vessel!” See London Millennial Harbinger, vol. i. p. 343, *note*.

Take another instance. There is a Mr. Henry Grew, pastor of a church in Hartford, U. S., an open and avowed Sabellian, denying that there is any distinction of persons in the Godhead, a sentiment which is demonstrably subversive of the whole Gospel. This person commenced a correspondence with Mr. Campbell, in the first volume of his *Millennial Harbinger*, and honestly avowed his *heresy* from the very outset, impugning the doctrine of the Trinity in rather coarse terms. This correspondence has been continued, at intervals, ever since, and has elicited from Grew, what I must regard as no inconsiderable portion of bold blasphemy! But, notwithstanding this, he is Mr. Campbell's "dear brother Grew." In 1832, this Grew published a tract of sixty-nine pages, 12mo., entitled, "A Tribute to the Memory of the Apostles;" and in the following year, (see Mr. C.'s *Millennial Harbinger*, vol. iii. p. 239,) Mr. Campbell, *without the smallest qualification whatever*, recommends it to his readers, "as well deserving the attention of the Christian communities, and worthy to be entitled, 'A Tribute to the Memory of the Apostles.'" Yet who that has not had an opportunity of seeing it, could believe, that this pamphlet contains a direct attack on the doctrine of the Trinity, and the personality of the Holy Spirit. "The worship of the Spirit of God, in distinction from the Father," says Mr. Grew, "is authorised by no divine precept, or recorded practice, of any prophet, *or apostle*, or saint, or angel, in the holy book. There is not a single address to the Holy Spirit, either of prayer or praise, in all the Bible." Indeed! What then are we to understand by the following prayer of the apostle Paul: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all; AMEN."—2 Cor. xiii. 14. If the Holy Spirit be not a distinct person from the Father and the Son, why are believers to be baptized into his name?—Matt. xxviii. 19. And how could Ananias and Sapphira, in lying unto the Holy Ghost, lie unto God,—Acts v. 3—9. And what shall we make of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? It is an unpardonable sin; yet it is not committed against either the Father or the Son?—Matt. xii. 31, 32.

But it is time for me to desist. Who that knows and loves the Truth can help grieving, that such *poison* as this pamphlet contains, should be imported from America, and industriously circulated among the churches of this country? and that by one, who tells us that he does it under "some solemn consciousness of ac-

countability at that tribunal whither we are all tending!" HOLY SPIRIT! *Mercifully remove the obscuring film from his mental vision, and, ere it be too late, give him to see the error of his way, and to turn from it; so that the things which belong unto his peace may be known unto him, at least in this his day, before they are hid for ever from his eyes. AMEN.*

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On a general review of the productions of Mr. Campbell's pen, I should be disposed to allot him a pretty high station, merely *as a writer*. He is blessed with a prolific mind, exuberant fancy, and quick perception; and expresses his meaning with great spirit and energy, but not without much incorrectness and many provincialisms. He also often terminates his subjects abruptly, and leaves his writings incomplete. As an advocate for what he calls the "Ancient Order of things,"—"the simplicity of Gospel worship,"—I know not his equal; and in beating down the traditions of men, which the apostle Paul tells us, "always turn from the truth,"—Titus i. 14, it must be acknowledged, that he has done good service to the cause of Christ. But,—as too frequently happens with men of talent, in their zeal for Reform,—he knows not where to stop. To say nothing of "the ancient Gospel,"—which I grieve to say he has garbled and mutilated, so as to render it no Gospel at all,—I think he has acted very injudiciously, in changing many scripture terms, such as putting *favour* for *Grace*—*reform* for *Repent*,—*loaf* for *Bread*,—*reign* of heaven, for *Kingdom* of heaven, &c. &c. The consequence of this has been, to introduce a new vocabulary of Scripture names, not at all for the better, and often much for the worse, as it would be very easy to shew, were this the place for doing it. But I close these remarks. I have now submitted my reasons for declining to adopt *Campbellism*, and for abiding by the maxim that I find upon record, coming recommended—as it does—by the highest authority: "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better,"—Luke v. 39.

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